

THE MORNING IS NEAR US



Susan Glaspell

THE MORNING IS NEAR US

A NOVEL

*"Oh, the morning is near us, the morning!
Even now his fore-runner approaches,
Yon dim-shining star."*

EURIPIDES.



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TO
MY BROTHER RAY
AND
HIS WIFE FLORENCE

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The Morning Is Near Us

Chapter I

THREE years now, and three months more than that, the Chippman place had stood there and no smoke had come from the chimney, no light had said night was falling and a family would gather within for supper, to read or talk a little, then sleep.

Once all of that had been true. In this bleakness had been fire and light and voices, ever since the days Ezra Chippman took the land because a person could be by himself here. There was land in plenty then, you could about have your pick, others had taken more open country. Perhaps Ezra did not want to be too near Silas Burroughs, with whom he had come from New York State. Silas was first in knowing the time for rest and the hours for the road, and a man might rather be alone than be second. However that may have been, he liked this place because a man could be by himself here, and since then the Chippmans had been a good deal by themselves.

So thought Warren, the last, or the last around there, as he drove out that afternoon to get papers he would

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need in turning over the place. They hadn't even taken the papers. Well, if the house had burned he could have given a quit-claim deed and Lydia would have signed, and who else was there to raise a voice?

You left the town and after you'd crossed the creek went into what was about a gulley; as low hills came down on both sides, banking the road, Warren put up the car window, having lost the sun. After a half mile or so of this there was a dip to the left, and here was the approach to the Chippman place. You didn't see the house from the road, not even after you'd turned, not until you'd wound a bit and were almost upon it. The hills were just high enough to hide the Chippmans. Yes indeed, a man could be by himself here.

He drove between the cedars his grandfather had planted because Grandmother Betsy Chippman, home alone one day, bought them from a traveling tree-man. A person had to do something, she'd said. It was almost as if the Chippmans had known from the first they were getting their place ready for the cemetery.

Now he was in front of the house, but just sat there. As if getting courage for the house, he looked up at the cemetery: for really, the most cheerful thing about the place was the cemetery, there in the sun, though now the house was shadowed. Graveyard Hill had once been Great-grandfather's land, as well as open country beyond—the crops had had sun, whether the family did or

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not. But this land that lay longest in the sun had gradually passed to others, either the living or the dead. Twice in his own memory those bars that fenced the dead had moved nearer the house. Father had lost heart and didn't care about land as most farmers did. The dead needed it, was all he'd said.

Grass and weeds had grown over the flag-stone walk up to the door. Your feet found it there, but not your eyes. He stopped, letting his feet find it, scraping one of them back and forth. As a little boy he had been set to pulling out weeds between these stones. No little boy did that now, and why should he, when feet did not want to go to this door? His foot moving over a big flat stone, to test its area, he saw Lydia and him jumping from stone to stone. If you stood at the back of one and had to reach the next—Lydia couldn't make it, but he could.

Thinking thus of jumps from stone to stone, he looked ahead at the house. A good thing they had not heard from Lydia, for she couldn't live here now, and who would want to, after all that had gone on. Perhaps Father had been right in the way he left the place—a sentiment, possibly a gesture to the world, leaving it to Lydia if she wanted to live there; as if, at that late day, trying to make up to her for something. And if in three years she did not take the place the land would go to the cemetery and the house be torn down. The cemetery needed it too, for the dead were moving down this slope; right against the

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Chippman fence they were now, and the fence breaking down, as if to let them in. Yes, the dead increased, and the Chippman land was here waiting for them. Day after tomorrow the three years would be up, and no word from Lydia; so he would turn the place over to Judge Kircher, as trustee for the cemetery.

Nor would the world lose a beautiful house when this one was torn down. Stark it looked this late afternoon. Trouble was, it was in three parts, work of three generations, and the two later builders had not worked in harmony with the man who built first. That wing to the left, nearest the cemetery, was part of the house that Ezra built. It was low—story and a half, and if you could think of it by itself it seemed as it should be, and so was good, as those early houses were good. But Ezra's son, Warren's grandfather, thought a low house was a poor house; a second story would catch more sun from the south, and in an attic above the second story you could dry things for winter. Warren remembered the smell of apples up there, and he had sometimes carried up clothes to be dried in rainy weather. It had been a good place to play, you could swing from those rafters. He and Lydia—well, never mind, that was all gone now, wiped out by what happened, and all a man could do was go ahead as best he could.

In building up to catch the sun Grandfather should have reenforced the old foundations. They were giving

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now, grumbling at the extra load they'd carried all those years. You saw their disapproval in the way the sills sagged, though tall grasses did not let you see the foundations themselves.

Then Father had added his wing. This was for Mother to get the last sun. "She likes the sun from the west when she's getting supper," he remembered Father saying. A dip in the hills gave the west sun at just this place after the rest of the house had lost it. Slowly the Chippmans had learned how to get the sun—and in striving for their place in it had destroyed the house. A cock-eyed house it was, Warren thought, the middle too high and too narrow for the wings, making it look like an ill-formed bird.

Father's wing had a right-angled turn, so at the back there was a little court and that side of the house was more inviting than the front. The new wing Father had painted white—to be more cheerful, he'd said. The rest of it had once been gray and then brown, and now it didn't know whether it was gray or brown. "We'll paint it all white in the spring," Father said. But just as the buttercups were coming up in the grass Mother died—and what did he care then whether his house was white or gray or brown?

Well, he'd have to go in; get what he needed, get back to town, be about his own business and stop thinking about the past—where did *that* get anybody?

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The lock did not want to let him in, wanting to hold its secrets, and turning the key back and forth, he was again looking up at the cemetery, serene there in the last sun. He could see him and Lydia, sometimes Henry Kircher, playing tag round the headstones. They would slip away from Lydia, but she'd come tagging after, so little she would stumble over graves and have to be picked up. The cemetery had never been a gloomy place to the Chippman children. Just so old Mr. Morris, the sexton, wasn't around, it was a good place to play. "And have you no respect for the dead?" old Morris would shout, probably just because he thought he had to. Warren suspected he rather liked hearing their voices as he worked there alone; sometimes he would turn his back, pretending not to see. It was always a great day when men were digging a grave, but they were not allowed to go there when the carriages came, only as far as their own fence could they go then. He remembered one funeral when Lydia came tagging along to the fence, eating bread with syrup dripping from it, and then it was he, her brother three years older, cried: "And have you no respect for the dead?"

That made him smile a little as he stepped in, but quickly he moved back to leave the door open. Maybe it would go out—that smell of the past, reproachful smell of things that have been lived with and then left alone.

A cap hung on the hat-rack—that was an old cap of

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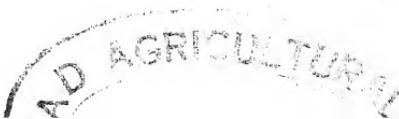
Father's. Underneath was a pair of rubbers. They must have been Mother's. Funny they had never been picked up, for Mother had ceased to wear them long before this key was turned on the outside of the door.

He looked in the sitting-room. Everything just as it had been when the Chippmans locked the door and went away. Things did not seem to know they were left for good, seemed waiting for the family to come back. The album on the center-table waited for someone to open it and say, "This was Uncle Ephraim," or—"See Grandmother as a bride." The Boston rocker waited for someone to sit in it, so it could squeak once more. There was the "throw" Grandmother had made of pieces of silk and the afghan Mother crocheted before she was married.

It didn't look like the houses of today. Even when he was young this had been of an older time. While other houses were changing—modern furniture, conveniences—this remained as it was before: some good things—the very old ones—and some hideous ones, like the Boston rocker and that spindly table in the middle of the room. Nothing got thrown out. Mother and Father seemed to want it to stay just as it was.

He would have to go up to his father's room, the room that had been Mother and Father's, and in the horse-hair trunk in the closet would be the tin box that had the papers.

The stairs made little surprised sounds, and he found



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himself going gingerly, as one who does not want to be heard.

He had to pull the trunk out from the back of the closet and as he knelt to it something brushed his face. That was Mother's plum-colored wool dress.

He found the key for the box in one of the little side drawers of the marble-topped bureau. His father had one day said to him, "If anything happens to me, Warren, you'll find that key at the back of this little drawer." And there it still was, undisturbed.

These bureau drawers were full of things. Before the house was torn down he'd have to come out and look them over. That wasn't a job he wanted. He'd bring Ivy with him—some morning—and they'd go ahead in business-like way, not stopping to think about things, as it was hard not to do here alone today.

Opening the box to make sure he had what he needed he found he had put it down on the bed. This was the old four-poster and on it the blue and white quilt they said Grandmother pieced the last year of her life.

Looking down at the bed he could almost see his mother there as the little boy used to see her when, getting up before the others—why did children want to get up so early when their days were so long?—he would sometimes venture into the room. She wore a high ruffled nightdress, sleeves long and ruffled at the wrists—very different from the gowns Ivy wore when sometimes

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she wore a nightgown instead of her pajamas. Mother's cheeks would be flushed with sleep and her eyes even deeper blue because they had been long closed. Her flaxen hair was in two braids that came round her shoulders. Her full red lips would part—you could see her white even teeth; she seemed all dreamy and dewy—though he had not thought those words then. Her fine hair went back from a low broad brow—and what was it that was curious? Nearly as he remembered—one forgot, forgot so much—the line of the hair wasn't quite even, a little lower on one side than the other, giving a look—well, all her own. She would still be sleepy as the little boy stood there, and the deep blue eyes would slowly close—then so very slowly open. Her eyebrows and lashes were dark, strange on the fair skin and below the flaxen hair. She was very beautiful, he had thought then; and remembering now thought—more beautiful than anyone I ever saw.

What would they do with this bed? Here he had been born, and Lydia. Here Mother had died. He remembered his father going from the room, moving as one moves in pain, too much pain to know where the pain is. What *would* they do with the bed? Oh—anything. Well, what? Not give it away. Break it up—like the house? The cemetery didn't need a bed, that was sure. And Ivy didn't want this bed, even though it was "good." "It wouldn't fit into our house," she said—"not go with our other things. And

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—please, Warren; let's not." He understood; felt about the same way himself.

Their past had been taken from them by what happened in that downstairs room. Yet it was funny. Even though you've given up a past it hasn't given you up. It comes uninvited—and sometimes half welcome.

When he was downstairs he wanted to go straight out the door, yet found himself walking through the rooms. A funny house—not like any other he knew, little halls and turnings and steps between the different parts. A good place for children to play—you could hide. But no children played here now, or ever would again. In the three years and three months he had never brought his own children near the place.

He was in the dining-room and could see into the kitchen. Through a sagging shutter came a ray of that last sun of day Mother had wanted. It still came in, though there was no one to want it now. He watched it move and go, and now this house of a past no one wanted would know another night alone.

And though he wanted to go he stood looking at a certain place at the dining-room table—on the far side from him, nearest the kitchen. Two chairs were pushed back at hasty angles. Three years and three months more than that they had stood just so, as if holding what they knew. With determined step he went over to them, took

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first one and then the other and set them back against the wall—breaking *that* up, at least.

Then hastily he went out to the car, and felt better when the engine broke the stillness and he was moving back to the world in which he now lived, where one *could* live, and had to.

Chapter II

AT four o'clock the next afternoon Warren went to see Judge Kircher. He pushed the revolving door of the Central Office Building at just two minutes of four —when you dread a thing you must not let yourself find reasons for delaying. It seemed unfair to the judge to dread him, for he always received Warren with consideration, but this itself recalled all the consideration there had been, and the need for it.

"Pleasant day, Warren," said Charlie Jones, the gentle old elevator-man who had a nice little grocery store until a chain-store set up on the corner. Warren used to spend pennies there, for it was only a block from the school, and Mr. Jones had treated these small sales with respect and interest. Well, plenty had failed with the changing times. Had to change *with* the times—that was the trick. Not so easy when you are old.

Waiting a moment in the outer office Warren straightened his tie—already straight, smoothed his hair. He was nearing forty, dressed as the well-to-do business man, but he somehow retained the look of a rather gaunt country boy. He looked like his father, and it was a nice thing about the Chippmans that they had not lost a look of

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the land, as if here were a strain, a way of life, too deep-rooted to give way at once.

"Glad to see you, Warren," the judge received him heartily.

And just as the Chippmans had a somewhat gaunt look of early America Judge Kircher had a well-filled-out look of the Germany of his forebears. He had come over as a boy and his hair was gray rather than fair now, his face was often flushed but you could not say his cheeks were rosy, as no doubt the cheeks of that German boy had been.

"About the place," Warren plunged in. "The time is up tomorrow. I haven't heard from Lydia, so I suppose I turn it over."

Judge Kircher sat looking at a paper-weight, looking into a glass ball on an alabaster base. He picked it up, rubbing it as if to ascertain its shape.

"I suppose you do," he said at last, putting down the weight as if suddenly tired of it. "Strange you didn't hear from Lydia."

"It's just like her," said Warren, then fidgeted, for he didn't want to get to talking about things. "I mean, she has stopped writing."

"And do you write to her?" the judge asked.

"No," he admitted, "I don't—much. You see, she's been away so long."

"How long?"

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"Well, she went away to school before she was sixteen, and she never came back."

"But that wasn't her fault, was it?" the judge reminded.

"No. No, I didn't mean it was her fault," said Lydia's brother, trying not to be irritated, for the judge had that dreamy look of wanting to dwell in the past.

"How old is Lydia now?"

"I'm thirty-eight. Lydia's three years younger."

"Yes," said the judge, "I know."

He was again occupied with the glass ball, gazing as if seeing in it all that had gone on. "Little Lydia is thirty-five," he said—and under his breath, "Poor child."

He leaned back in his chair, letting go what he had been reading in the sphere. "Perhaps she didn't get your letter. Where is she?"

"Heaven knows. Her address remains her bank in Constantinople. But she isn't there. That's just an address for forwarding. Once she was in Syria. I couldn't even find the place in the atlas," said Warren with the irritation of one accustomed to good driving maps.

"I wrote three months ago, since then I've cabled. No answer to my letter—no reply to the cable. A person *would* answer a cable, you'd think. But she certainly must know by now. She knows if she doesn't live in the house, or say by May first she is going to live in it, the place goes to the cemetery."

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The judge smiled. "And the cemetery is anxious. They telephone me."

"They telephone me," said Warren.

"Of course," said Judge Kircher, as if reluctantly speaking up for the cemetery, "it is extremely unlikely a woman who has lived for years in Europe—and we mustn't forget Asia and Africa, would come back to an abandoned place by a cemetery and live there."

"No," said Warren, "she won't be back."

As he spoke the door opened and the judge's secretary came in. He held out a yellow envelope.

"A telegram for Mr. Chippman. Sent over from his office. They said it concerned your conference."

"Are we having a conference?" the judge asked mildly.

But Warren was not mild. He tore the envelope nervously.

"Why—it's from Mexico," he said.

"Lydia?"

"Well, it *is*." He looked up in exasperation. "If she was on this continent why didn't she say so!"

"She seems to be saying so now—and what else does she say?"

Warren read slowly: "Let the dead go somewhere else. First I knew about Father's arrangement. Happy to come back and save our home. Flying to Kansas City with Koula and Diego. Pancho Villa will follow by train."

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"I thought Pancho Villa was dead," said the judge, as Warren seemed unable to say anything at all.

"Of course he's dead!" Warren burst out. "That's just a lot of nonsense! *Fine* time for such foolishness!"

"No, I believe it never was certain. You can't tell about these Mexican generals. Lydia may have had him in hiding all this time.

"Anyway," he went on, as this comment had not been helpful, "Lydia must have some money. It costs something to wire the superfluous words 'Let the dead go somewhere else,' and it must take quite a little to fly to Kansas City with—let's see, who are they? Koula and Diego."

"If she has money why does she want to live in a place that's falling down!"

"Well, the money will come in handy restoring it."

"It would be absurd to restore it! Absurd for more reasons than one."

The judge may have been of the same mind, for he didn't follow that up but remarked cordially: "How nice it is going to be to see Lydia."

Lydia's brother had no reply to this for they were piling up on him—all the reasons why it was not going to be at all nice to have Lydia back. Reviving the talk!—just as people had about worn it out and were ready to let go of it. She'd *look* strange. Her looks had always been—well, not like any of the rest of them. And now

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she'd be stranger than ever—foreign—and act in a way nobody'd understand. Let the dead go somewhere else! What kind of talk was *that*? Worst of all, he was fond of her—though for a long time it had seemed easier to act as if she didn't exist. Poor Lydia. Yes, but poor Mother—just as they were willing to let her be forgotten, rest in peace. And Father—they'd start in on *that* again. The cemetery people would have plenty to say. They'd hash over everything they'd ever known. What a way for Father to leave his property—bringing Lydia back after he'd kept her away years and years! And what a thing for *her* to do—taking him up on it! And damn it all—there was Ivy. As if she hadn't gone through enough on account of his family! She hated to have people talking. Now he'd have to go home and tell his wife his sister was coming back! The judge ought to *do* something about it. He was supposed to be running things—then why didn't he do something about it?

But the judge was saying: "No doubt Lydia has become a very fascinating woman. I for one will be delighted to see her."

"She can't *live* there," said Warren. "It was right to tear the place down because it's falling down!"

"It will need repairs, that's true."

"And she can't live out there alone—right at the edge of the cemetery. You might as well be *in* the cemetery."

"Oh, I don't know, Warren; your folks lived there a

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great many years. And mine on the other side. Anyway she appears not to be alone. She has these friends—Koula and Diego. And we're forgetting Pancho Villa, who's coming by train. Now I would have said," mused the judge, "that Pancho Villa would prefer to fly."

All very well for *him* to be funny about it! Easy enough to be funny when it wasn't *your* sister—wasn't your family was going to be talked about all over again!

"Well she hasn't any friends here now," he said. "After nineteen years you're not remembered. Then why come back?"

"Oh, yes, she has friends—a start. There's you, and your wife. And what about me? I'm her friend. And then there's my nephew, who'll be a neighbor of hers. Henry always liked Lydia. I noticed it when they were growing up."

Perhaps Warren's face was too unyielding, for the judge's manner changed. Very quietly he said: "Lydia wasn't very well treated, Warren. She must have a sweet and forgiving nature—welcoming this opportunity to come home after she was kept away for years. What is it she says? 'Happy to come back and save our home.' Well, if she's like that—seems to me it's about time to appreciate her."

Chapter III

HE couldn't tell Ivy before dinner because they were having company. He left Judge Kircher's office so upset he forgot all about their dinner and got home barely in time to dress and make the cocktails.

Looking around the table at his guests he thought, what would happen if suddenly I were to say, "What do you think? My sister's coming home to open up the old place. She's going to live there."

Well, nothing would happen. They'd try to conceal how great was their astonishment, they'd express cordial interest. And they'd be thinking—oh, thinking plenty! Opening up the old place meant opening up a great many other things.

Elfreda Meade was there tonight. He couldn't like Elfreda—even if she was Ivy's sister-in-law. She'd done more than her share in making Ivy unhappy about things. And now Ivy had about finished living through it. She'd held up her head and held her place—kept things moving right for all of them. The people here tonight were the best the town had to offer. The MacVeighs didn't go many places—not that he thought any more of them for being so stand-offish. But if you were thinking of it socially—

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And Ivy did think of it socially. "It isn't just me," she'd say. "I'm thinking of you—business and everything. And the children must have the right place when they grow up."

Well—maybe so. He wouldn't have thought much about it himself—just so business was all right, and the automobile business was. He was head of the whole district now; it hadn't always been easy sledding. But Ivy had this pride in their place in the town. What hit her pride hit hard. She wouldn't want Lydia back. Not that any of it was Lydia's fault, and while he was talking golf with Mrs. MacVeigh he was wondering what Lydia was like now, and he remembered, unpleasantly, Let the dead go somewhere else. Under the circumstances not a very tactful thing to put in a telegram. It made him sort of laugh though. Was Lydia fun? She used to be, though she never had much of a chance, poor kid.

Finally—thank God—the last bridge hand had been lost and the last goodnight said half a dozen times. They turned back to the living-room. Ivy moved to turn off a light but instead put away the cards and folded the tables. As she stooped the light from the floor-lamp fell on her fair hair. Her movements were sure and capable. When she straightened she looked tall and strong—a good wife, doing her part to make things right for them.

Then she yawned—the satisfied yawn of the good hostess. "I really think the MacVeighs had a good time.

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The dinner was good, don't you think, Warren?"

"The dinner was fine," he said heartily.

"Well—that's that." She moved again to put out lights.

"Sit down a minute."

"It's late," she said.

"One cigarette, and then to bed."

"We ought to—" But she sank into a deep chair, stretched her feet way out and circled her arms about, relaxing her shoulders.

"Say, Ivy, what do you think?"

Ivy only pulled in one foot and inspected her slipper.

"Who do you think's coming back?"

"Coming back?" she asked with a little more interest.

"Lydia's coming back," he said with some bravado.

The foot she had been holding dropped to the floor.

She sat staring at him. "What was that you said?"

"I said—Lydia's coming back."

"I don't believe it!" she retorted.

"Believe it or not, she's coming. Right away. In a couple of days."

She edged way out on the chair, leaning toward him.

"Warren, what are you telling me?" she demanded.

"I've told you what I'm telling you."

"But you said—you said *Lydia's* coming back."

He nodded.

"Evidently she doesn't want to lose the place," he went on, as Ivy was speechless. "So she's coming back to take

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it. Do you know, I never thought Lydia was so mercenary."

"Warren! Stop that nonsense! You *know* she can't come back. It must be *stopped*."

"I can't stop it."

"Of course you can stop it!" But then she cried: "What shall we *do*?"

"Nothing, I guess."

As he looked at Ivy, saw all that had gone out of her face since she said goodnight to her friends, he said, as easily as he could, "Oh, well—what's the difference?"

"*Difference?*" she said bitterly. "Why don't be a *fool!* It's *all* the difference—and you know it! You know it as well as I do. You ought to know it better!"

Groping for help—for himself, for her, he went back to the things Judge Kircher had said. "The truth is, Lydia wasn't very well treated. If she wants to come home, we'll be good to her, won't we? Matter of fact, she may have become a very fascinating woman."

"If she's a fascinating woman, why should she come *here*? She must have her own friends—after all these years. And just as we had lived it down! And the children! Is it going to follow *them* all their lives?"

"I know," he said soothingly. "I know how you feel." As she did not speak: "But I don't think it's as bad as all that." After an impatient exclamation from Ivy: "I'm

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sorry she's coming." As still she did not speak: "You heard me, didn't you, Ivy? I'm sorry."

"Sorry isn't enough," she said.

But he scarcely heard her, for he was seeing him and Lydia and Henry Kircher on the turning-pole in the attic—rafter that made a turning-pole. The elm was a fine tree to climb—seemed as if it just grew to be climbed, had that in mind all along. No kids ever had more fun playing tag around headstones.

"Maybe she got homesick," he said.

"*Homesick?*" cried Ivy. "For what?"

"Oh, I don't know,"—his voice drawing away a little, "we used to have our own good times."

"No doubt you did. But that's all— You *know* she shouldn't come back!"

"Did I ask her to come back? I had to advise her—that was a legal matter—that if she didn't take the house it would be torn down and the land go to the cemetery. Well, evidently she doesn't want it torn down. So she's coming back to save it."

"Warren,"—she spoke as to one whose mind is not working well, "save *what*?"

"Save our past, perhaps."

Unfortunately Ivy laughed.

"All right—laugh," he said sharply. "Mother—you may laugh about Mother—"

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"I'm *not* laughing about your mother! I *never* laughed about your mother!"

"Mother—she was sweet," he said doggedly, and as if determined to say it without confusion. "She was lovely to look at, and gentle, and good to us—well, to me she was. Father—I'll tell you one thing—a man never loved a woman more, and there were times that were happy—lots of them," he insisted, "though it ended—like that."

He sat thinking of it, lost to her, and Ivy did not speak. Then she said, gently: "Of course, Warren. Of course that must be true. But that's all over now, and you know why it can't be revived. And you know,"—her voice rising, "you know just as well as I do all the reasons why Lydia mustn't come back. It must be *stopped*."

He shook his head. "I can't stop it. And even if I wanted to Judge Kircher wouldn't approve."

"Oh, yes, Judge Kircher! Always Judge Kircher! Is *he* running our family?"

"It would have run on the rocks without him. Come on, Ivy—let's get to bed. Let's take it as it comes and not worry. After all Lydia was never much known here. She was only a little girl out in the country. Her coming back isn't going to make much of a stir."

"You are forgetting the cemetery," said Ivy bitterly.

Ivy was right, the cemetery association had plenty to say. It had been expected the Chippman land would be

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turned over to them that week. Now this Lydia Chippman was coming home. Anyone with a grain of sense would know she couldn't live there. It was just selfishness—spite. Most of all it was ingratitude. The town had stood by the Chippmans and it was fitting their place become the cemetery. Weren't the dead entitled to a final resting-place? But no—after nineteen years away this Lydia Chippman was coming home from God knew where to rob the dead. That was just what it amounted to, for there was no other land to be had. The Kirchers, on the other side, couldn't give their land—it was needed for the dairy farm, to bring good milk to the living. But the Chippman place just stood there waiting for the dead. After desecrating the cemetery—as everyone knew they had—well, suspected they had, it was little enough to give their land. It could be made a beautiful approach, cars not twisting and stalling as on the side used now. There was something most unseemly about motor trouble when taking the dead to a final resting-place.

And this Lydia—how long would *she* live? She wasn't very old—younger than Warren. Until she moved over into the cemetery there'd be no room for anyone! It was selfish—inconsiderate—ungrateful. The woman must be crazy.

This cemetery had known emergencies and so was a more living issue than a cemetery that goes the even course of its way. The first burying-ground had been

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down by the river, and when the river-bed changed and graves were threatened—did the town leave forgotten dead down there in the muck? By no means. They built up the cemetery association—entertainments were given, cakes baked and what-not, and all dead—many of them unclaimed and forgotten—were decently and expensively moved to Hillside, crowding Hillside. That was why the cemetery needed breathing room.

It was suggested to Judge Kircher that this was little more than an attempt to defraud, that legal action be taken condemning the land for the dead. He said it couldn't be done. Oh, of course, he was on *their* side, and many a one knew why—suspected why at any rate.

This Lydia—what a strange-looking girl she had been. She didn't look like anyone else—Chippmans or anybody. Odd too, those who remembered her a little said she was odd. Her coming back boded no good. It would all start over again.

The last heard of her had been through Elfreda Meade, and Elfreda was a family connection. Her husband was Ivy Chippman's own brother—that made her some sort of connection of Lydia. Elfreda had seen her in Rome, about three years ago—right after the dreadful thing happened. But here was this Lydia with a gay party—not one of them Americans, and she so foreign-looking herself that at first Elfreda wasn't sure. But she suspected, and then heard a man talking a very strange language

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say Lydia—only he said Lee-dea, and sort of sung it. So for the sake of family connections Elfreda went up and spoke to her, stretching a point to be nice to her, saying the town missed her father and grieved for him.

But instead of being grateful this Lydia acted as if she had been struck; she went almost white—though she was too dark for that, and when Elfreda, still wanting to be nice, spoke of seeing her the next day, Lydia whispered, “Oh, *no*,” as if seeing someone from her old home—a family connection at that—just wasn’t to be thought of! She had almost lost her voice at the horror of seeing Elfreda again, but stammered something about leaving Rome first thing in the morning. She had actually left the restaurant, though she hadn’t finished her dinner—as if she couldn’t stay in the same room with Elfreda, whom she hadn’t introduced to her friends. And that was the last anyone had seen or heard of her.

A pretty business—when the cemetery had made all its plans for landscaping the ground, tearing down the ramshackle old place as John Chippman, sensibly enough, had said was to be done. For it had secrets—the Chippman place—and it was fitting it go. It had been justly condemned to destruction—and now it wasn’t going to be destroyed!

Chapter IV

AFTER years of silence Lydia became communicative. She telegraphed from Kansas City: "Very good flight. Hold everything. Arriving by bus Thursday noon. Anxious to get right out home and begin living there. Kindly open windows and get in a little food. Love. Lydia."

Let the dead go somewhere else— Hold everything! Swell words to flash into the telegraph office, where that Miss Nelson did too much talking!

Well, he tried to be jovial with Ivy, Lydia must have been somewhat with Americans or how would she know Hold everything? One didn't think of it as a slogan of the Syrians, or even the Mexicans.

Ivy advised a reply telegram, "Entirely impractical, strongly advise against coming." He had never seen Ivy so upset. Lydia was crazy—that's all there was to it, for how could she—Ivy—or anybody else on this earth get that place habitable in less than two days' time?

"You can't," said Warren, "and that's that. Lydia will have to be told when she gets here. She won't need to be told. She'll take one look and see for herself. She can make a little visit with us and then go away again—some country we never heard of."

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"And is this person called Koula and someone named Diego to make a visit with us?" Ivy would have him tell her.

"Koula may be a cat," he cheered; "and something tells me Diego is a parrot."

But no one cheered Warren, and Warren needed cheering, for he was getting more and more sorry for Lydia, arriving to find things like this. He felt guilty. None of them had been fair with Lydia; certainly he hadn't. He should have told her—told her a lot—and the fact was he had told her practically nothing. How much did Lydia know? He didn't even know how much she knew. Well, why hadn't she asked, he thought, trying to shift the blame. Why had *she* acted in such a damned funny way!

He remembered the fall Lydia was sent away. Aunt Jenifer had been there that summer, Grandfather's youngest sister, who lived in Cincinnati and used to send them the Christmas boxes, for her husband had left her what Father called very well-fixed. She had gray hair which she waved on kids, and they all talked about how nice and even she could make the waves. She was quite straight and slim and had nice dresses, so she didn't seem like an old lady; in fact she was about—well, she couldn't have been sixty.

He had an idea Aunt Jenifer knew more than he did about what made things strange in their house. There

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were moments—looks—which he suspected she understood. That had been the bad part of it—feeling something there and not knowing what it was, not knowing what he lived with. Even when he was a little boy it had sometimes left him with a child's lost feeling of things not being as they should be.

Their Aunt Jenifer had friends in town and he used to drive her in to see them. She would be silent on the homeward drives, as if turning something over in her mind, and when they got home she wouldn't have much to say to Mother. He remembered a look—his aunt's look—when his mother had turned abruptly from Lydia, who was asking for something.

Aunt Jenifer had seemed to take a great fancy to Lydia. When she went to town she would buy things for her, and her voice was more gentle when she spoke to Lydia—gentle or else very cheerful. He had seen her watching his sister, as if turning something over in her mind.

One night Father and Aunt Jenifer sat downstairs after the others had gone to bed—Warren found them there when he came home from seeing his girl. Let's see, who was his girl then? Hanging up his coat he heard Father say, as if he hated talking about it, "It's good of you, Aunt Jenifer," and she said, "I'll be glad to have Lydia. It will be better, I think."

Next day Father told Lydia she was to go home with

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Aunt Jenifer and go to school in Cincinnati, a great big place, where she would meet lots of nice girls and learn things.

Warren was in the room when his father said this to Lydia, but soon he went out, for Lydia just sat there, saying nothing, her thin dark face not telling what she felt. After a while she came out and stood near him as he milked.

"You like Aunt Jenifer, don't you, Lydia?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "I like Aunt Jenifer." And that was all she said, but when he got up he saw her looking around the place—as if she were already saying good-by.

He drove them in when they were leaving. Father went in too, but Mother said good-by at home. She came out to the buggy as they were getting in. She kissed Lydia, but then she drew away; she didn't hold her, as you'd think a mother would when her young daughter—not sixteen—was going away.

"I know you'll be good to Lydia, Aunt Jenifer," Mother said, in a voice—well, what kind of a voice *was* it?

No doubt about Aunt Jenifer's voice. It was sharp. "You may be sure of it," she said.

Mother just stood there. She had that look about her eyes—troubled, and somehow as if asking you to help her; at these times Father always did help her. "It's going

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to be just fine for Lydia. Isn't it, Lydia?" he said heartily, asking Lydia to help Mother.

Lydia said, "Yes, I'm sure it is." She added: "Good-by, Mother."

But it was of Mother his father kept thinking. He called back anxiously: "You'll be all right here, Hertha? I'll be back soon."

When he put in the suit-case he saw Aunt Jenifer reach out and take Lydia's hand.

The next June Warren said, "Lydia's school will be out soon. She'll be coming back."

"No," his father said, "your Aunt Jenifer wants to take her to the Lakes."

"But, Father, Lydia wrote me about wanting to come home. She's looking forward to it."

"This is better," his father said firmly.

"But, Mother," he had persisted—his mother sat nearby sewing, "Lydia wants—"

Then he stopped; he just couldn't go on—stopped by that look about his mother's eyes. Desperately troubled—asking for help.

His father came to the rescue. "Tell you what, Hertha, before we're through we'll make Lydia into such a lady we won't know her when we see her. We just won't *know* her," he added, with a laugh that wasn't as gay as it tried to be.

They never had a chance to find out whether they

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would have known her, for they never saw her again. Always some reason—Aunt Jenifer was going to Canada, or Washington, and Father always saying it was fine for Lydia.

Warren came to think perhaps it was. He had a job in town, before long he was married. He and Lydia didn't write often; he had his own affairs and she hers. They sent each other Christmas presents, and Lydia always sent presents to Mother and Father.

What would there be for her at home now, that was true, for more and more their mother dwelt in a troubled world of her own, and Father cared about only one thing—trying to make things right for Mother. The two were alone out at the old place now, living with whatever it was they lived with. He half knew; probably he could have put this and that together and known more. Something in him held back from that.

When Lydia was about twenty-three Aunt Jenifer wrote: "I want to see Europe before I'm too old, and even now I'm too old to go alone, so I want to take Lydia with me."

That would be fine for Lydia, Father said.

"Say, Father," he said, even though his mother was there, "I for one would like to see the kid. Why doesn't she come home for a visit before she goes to Europe?"

His father said there wasn't time.

"Then I think I'll go and see her," Warren said, but



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in the press of things—hard to make the grade at first, and Ivy was used to living well, he didn't go.

After two years over there, Aunt Jenifer died. She had left Lydia enough to live on, and Father said that was fine.

"But she's alone over there," Warren said. "Let's cable her to come home."

His father got him outside and told him, "Once and for all, Warren, I want you to stop this talk about Lydia coming home."

"Why?"

"Because your mother isn't well."

"Then Lydia ought to be here."

"Be still!" his father cried, more angry than Warren had ever seen him—angry, but helpless; and Warren, feeling helpless too, said no more.

Lydia never wrote about coming home, and after a time she wrote that she was married.

"That's fine," Father said, and added in a pious way Warren didn't care for, "I hope he is a good man."

Soon after this he had to send some papers for Lydia to sign. There was a piece of land which years before Father had put in his name and Lydia's. It wasn't land Father worked, and now there was a good chance to sell. But when he sent the deed in this foreign name, she returned it saying: "Warren, I'm afraid it wouldn't be legal, for the marriage wasn't legal. It couldn't be—

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on account of the divorce. My legal name is Chippman. Anyway, that marriage—or whatever you would call it—is now dissolved. Dissolved—do you say? Well—over."

He didn't tell his mother and father, guarding this secret of Lydia's. When he sent the papers a second time he wrote as postscript to his letter, "Be a good girl."

He was as bad as Father. He'd disliked Father's pious hope that Lydia's husband was a good man. Now here he was, telling her to be a good girl. And what had either of them ever done for her? Nothing to let her feel they cared what she did or how things went for her. Yet he'd had the impulse to write that. He meant it. He *did* care—only, well, he'd fallen in with things as they were. Even though he didn't know why they were that way.

He wrote her of their mother's death and she cabled back: "Shall I come home and keep house for Father? Would like to."

So he took this up with his father. "There's no reason why Lydia shouldn't come home now, is there?" he asked.

His father sagged these days, as if what kept him alive had about gone out of him. But he instantly straightened. "There was no reason before, was there?"

That was most unreasonable, for certainly his father had told him Lydia shouldn't come home because her mother wasn't well. But there are times when you can't argue.

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He went at it another way. "It's so lonely for you here by yourself. Wouldn't you like Lydia to come home? She says she wants to. Perhaps she's lonely too."

His father seemed to be resisting something. Warren suspected he more than half wanted Lydia to come home. He had loved her. His actions didn't say so, yet he had. Warren felt sure of that. Then what was this? A loyalty stronger than any other feeling? As if it would be betrayal for Lydia to come now that her mother was gone, as if it would be saying it was Mother who had kept her away? Something like that it must have been, for so vehemently his father said, "No!" adding, as if to make it reasonable: "She is better off where she is."

Warren wrote: "It's too bad, Lydia, it was good of you to offer—but Father has grown strange and it seems he wants to live there alone with his memories of Mother. I suppose that's what it is. Anyway it would be no place for you to live."

That was the last Lydia said about coming home.

And then when it happened—(even yet he would think of it that way—"when it happened," or "afterwards") he had day-by-day thought, "I must write to Lydia." It seemed an impossible letter to write. Each day he put it off and daily it grew harder. If he couldn't soften it—explain by telling the whole truth, what led up to it, what had all the time been in their lives that had to come to this, then it just seemed impossible to

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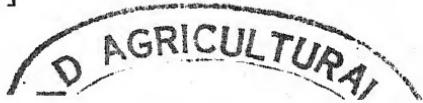
tell it. He got queer about it. Maybe the Chippmans were queer. He knew they were supposed to be.

He made excuses. He didn't know where she was. One letter had been returned. Suppose this fell into someone else's hands? Wasn't she better off not to know? He kept telling himself that as soon as he got something ahead he'd go over and find Lydia.

Then a curt letter from her. "Warren," she wrote, "if you wrote me about Father and the letter went astray, please write again, telling what you told, telling all you can. But if you never wrote me at all, just letting me hear it from a stranger—from Elfreda Meade—if I am not more to you and was no more to the family than that—then, Warren, you need never write to me again and I will not write to you. Lydia."

It made him sick. There were days when it was all he could do to go to the office. But now things seemed to have become so bad he couldn't do anything about them. He couldn't have explained his helplessness and he wouldn't have believed it. He got into such a miserable state that he even tried to work up a grievance against Lydia. *She* hadn't had to take it. She got off easy. She was a long way off and hadn't had to stand people's sly or compassionate looks. It wasn't Lydia who had to live it down with the last shred of nerve she had left!

Darned well out of it! And if she wanted letters why didn't she say where to send them? This latest was post-



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marked some place in Syria—blurred—he couldn't even be sure what it was and couldn't find any such place in the atlas. If she wandered from one outlandish place to another how could she expect to be reached? If her address remained the bank in Constantinople why didn't she say so?

That was the only place he knew to write, and at last he had to write her about the property. "I'm terribly sorry, Lydia—your not having been told about Father. Of course I should have written you. I meant to, but put it off, because I hated to write it. I'd been thinking that before long I could come over and see you and that would be better than writing."

Then he told her their father had left the place to her if within three years she said she would come and live in it, and if she took possession within thirty days after the three years. If not, the land would go to the cemetery. "The time is getting close now," he said, adding: "But of course you wouldn't want to live there, with all the associations; the place is pretty lonely-looking now, and in bad repair."

There was no reply to this letter. There had been no word at all until in answer to his cable the wire from Mexico said she was coming; then the second wire, saying she would arrive on the bus.

And why the bus—Ivy wanted to know. If she had money enough to fly from Mexico why couldn't she step

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from the Pullman like any other civilized person. They'd had just about enough of things that were different. Why couldn't Lydia act like everyone else? Heavens! Was she eccentric?

Thursday was a bad time to arrive for lunch; it was the cook's afternoon out. And why didn't she explain how many there would *be* for lunch—whether those outlandish names were people or what. It seemed to Ivy that Lydia was showing very little consideration.

Chapter V

A SMALL house—big barn. A flat field fenced in, beyond it rolling hills. Cows in a meadow—a white horse drawing a cultivator. An apple orchard. A boy pumping water way off yonder there; colts playing. Now the straight street of a little town. Three children standing behind a white fence waving at the bus. She nudged the children in front of her. “See? Wave back!” Koula waved, Diego looked uncertain. Lydia waved. Two dogs frisking. Tender green of grain beginning to come up. Women coming to their doorways to throw out a pail of water or shake a rug.

This was it. This the country she had known first and had not seen for many years and had never ceased to see. In country grander and more beautiful she had seen this country: in the valley of the Loire, on Sicily and Corfu, where Greek mountains rose to deep blue sky beyond a deep blue sea—she had seen this country.

“See?” she said to the children. “The cemetery. It’s on a hill!”

They looked, mildly interested, not at all disturbed by having a cemetery pointed out. They were peeling oranges.

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They weren't very far from home now. She was going home. At last. She was happy. She was afraid. Perhaps I will come to understand it, she thought. Then everything will be different. Then everything will be all right. Father wanted me to come home, she would say, when her courage lessened with the miles. How could you dread a thing that made you so happy?

Koula turned round. "Shouldn't I put on my hat?"

The child had observed all the others were wearing hats. Koula wanted to be like everyone else.

"If you like. I think I'll keep on my scarf. It's more comfortable."

Koula's scarf was from the market in Pueblo. Hers was from Smyrna. Koula had liked the scarf until she saw other people were wearing hats for traveling. Lydia had suggested the scarfs because Koula's hat was too big for leaning back. "I'll wear mine too," she had said, to make it right.

They all had baskets of maguey-fiber, string bags—serapes and pottery. They had started out so gaily with their bright and unwieldy assortment of treasures, but she had seen Koula looking at other people's luggage. Diego didn't care, didn't think he was wrong. He carried his big peaked hat proudly on his lap. But Koula didn't want to be different. To be unlike other people was to be wrong. Lydia knew how that could be—and got out

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Koula's hat. The little girl up front was wearing a hat. Koula would rather be "right" than lean back.

Koula, the little Greek girl, was five, and Diego was seven. He was part Indian. Her two children. She was taking them home. They would climb the elm and the apple tree, play tag and hide behind the grave-stones, as she and Warren had done.

Warren. He was the only one she would find there now. It would be strange without Father and Mother. Father wanted me to come home, she kept saying.

At first she would go on teaching the children herself—until they got used to things, until other children were used to them. She had an idea Pancho Villa would be a help in getting acquainted with other children.

Looking now at the back of Diego's proud head, as he looked out at the country, neither approving nor disapproving, not unduly interested but not hostile, she thought of the first time she had seen Diego. He was standing beside the shoemaker's shop when she went to get her sandals and he was watching other boys at play. His parents had come there from Yucatan and died of a sickness they contracted along the way. They brought this malady to the village, later four others died, and there was resentment about this. Diego had no relative and no friend. He was permitted to sleep in the shed back of the shoemaker's house, where he could help with the goats and the donkey, be useful on market-days. "But

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I have boys of my own," the kindly enough shoemaker grumbled when Lydia asked why that boy was not playing with the other boys.

She tried to talk to Diego. It was hard because Lydia spoke a rather too polite Spanish and Diego a dialect. She would invent errands for him to do so she could give him coins. What she could not stand was to see him watch others play. "Why, he's like me," she one day said to herself. Then she took him for her own. It had not been hard to do. No one else wanted him.

She was always making plans for him, as mothers will. Perhaps he would become a great artist, she thought—though smiling at herself, knowing that all Mexicans are not artists. He would be himself, she knew that. But never again—so far as in her power lay, would he feel he was not wanted.

What would Koula become? Koula would become an American, for she wanted to be like the people around her. She had taken Koula when she was three, a baby orphan on the island of Andros, living with too many cousins. "Seven are enough," this aunt of Koula's, who washed for Lydia, had said, and Lydia could see this was true. Of course Koula's baby tongue was Greek, which Lydia had learned to speak—after a fashion. Sometimes she would still try to talk Greek with her, but Koula had about forgotten it, and wanted to forget. "When you are away from Greece people think Greek is funny," she

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said. It was a great language, Lydia told her, perhaps the greatest there had ever been in the world. "I speak English," Koula would say. She was a chubby little girl with large dark eyes. She wanted her name changed to Katie, but this Lydia was trying to resist. "Koula has a softer sound," she would say. "And this is a name linked with your own past, that great past." But Koula didn't care about a past—she wanted a future, an American future. Diego, on the other hand, would not have wanted his name changed.

But Koula had to be herself. And never, she said of Koula too, was she to feel she was not wanted.

Perhaps that feeling—not being wanted, would leave her now, for now she was wanted. Her father wanted her to come home or he would not have left things as he had. Of course she didn't understand her being summoned back any more than she had understood her being kept away. There must be a reason.

That was what she used to tell herself about being kept away—there must be a reason, and that is why, though hurt and bewildered, she had not often been resentful. She wished Father had told her why it was. It is not easy to live your life wondering what is wrong with you. Perhaps now she would come to understand.

In the first years she used to turn it over and over, wondering what she had done. There was the time she slapped Elfreda Dobson, now Elfreda Meade, because

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Elfreda said something about her mother. Lydia didn't know what she meant, but didn't like the way she said it, so she slapped her mouth, good and hard. Elfreda ran to the teacher, who sent Lydia home with a note, and Lydia couldn't tell why she had done it, for she didn't want to say it was about Mother, especially as she didn't understand what it was. So she just said she did it because she felt like doing it, and got no supper. But this was foolish, for it happened several years before she was sent away, and Warren, who was never sent away, had done lots worse things than that.

Then the time she ran away with Henry Kircher and stayed out till twelve o'clock. But they only did it to see how it felt to stay out till twelve o'clock. They got very sleepy waiting for midnight. This would irritate a family but not enough to banish a child for nineteen years.

Perhaps she should have asked. Somehow—she couldn't.

She had felt more than ever alone after Aunt Jenifer's death, and that was why she had gone to the country to live with Henri. She had thought they were going to be married, but as they were about ready to leave Paris he said, in his light and charming way—she admired his ease about everything, "Lydia darling, I am afraid we will have to begin by living in sin. I thought my divorce was going through, but Adele is holding it up. We won't let her defraud us, will we?" He seemed to want her so

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much, and no one else wanted her; he was lonely too, or said so, and their things were all packed—not reasons enough, perhaps, for going to live in sin. But when he put it so lightly, so reasonably, she didn't want to make a fuss; and she did want to be with him. Life was gayer when she was with Henri, and what difference did it make to anyone else whether she lived in sin or how she lived?

She shouldn't have written home she was married, but it seemed about the same as being married, they would have been, except for the divorce. She thought Father would be glad she was making a life of her own. She just couldn't believe he never thought of her. There was the time he put her up on the horse—on Dobbin—held her while Dobbin walked slowly all round the barnyard. It was Father who said she could keep the puppy. The stick candy he brought from town—like little canes. When she broke her arm. His voice sometimes, especially when they were alone. So she had thought he would be glad she was not alone.

And then, after her mother's death, when even then he didn't want her to come home, but wanted to live there alone with his memories of Mother, that was when she gave up the idea of ever going home. She had thought it was Mother didn't want her. But no, it was Father too.

It was her nature to move easily and naturally among

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people. She was sure that was as it had been meant to be. But she would go a little way and then be stopped from within, like being afraid of being found out. When you aren't wanted by your own family you think there must be something wrong with you. What *was* it? If only they had told her. All her life she had been different with everyone else because they hadn't told her.

Different with Henri because they hadn't told her. Six months she lived with Henri and then one day he said, lightly as he said everything else: "You're an awful fraud, aren't you, Lydia?"

She was startled, and then at once this seemed part of all she did not know about herself.

"I do not think I am a fraud," she said.

"You cheat, don't you, Lydia?"

"Oh, no!" she cried.

"Oh, yes! You belie your looks. Now is that fair?"

Laughing a little at her bewilderment, "Look at you. Hidden fires, you say to a man's blood. Secrets. A gift. Well, darling, where *are* the hidden fires? What do you do with them when you go to bed?"

"You think—something is wrong with me?"

"That's it—something is wrong with you. You are too pure. You are cold—though I don't think you are really cold. But guarded—withdrawn. And you look as if underneath the reserve there waited—waited to flame and leap—" His voice was less light, was almost harsh. "You

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don't even know what I'm talking about, do you? You might live with one hundred men and you would never give yourself!"

Of course not. "But if I lived with one man who loved me?"

"I loved you. I wanted you—and that's a hell of a lot! In a way I love you yet. You are sweet. You are agreeable. But what are you so *afraid* of?"

She was stunned. She hadn't known she seemed afraid with Henri. She had felt lighter with him—almost merry. She liked their gay meals and the trips they took and all his fooling. It had seemed to release her from something. In these months she had thought less about the things that troubled her. But it seemed they had been there, just the same. She had thought she loved him—though gaily, and it had been good to be gay.

Henri was tired of her; it wasn't his fault, he couldn't help it if he was tired of her. So one day she said, "I think I will go to Greece." She had thought of Greece only as she said it. She must get away again. Farther away.

"Little Lydia is going in for the classics," he said.

So she had been a good deal in that part of the world—Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Arabia, sometimes with English or Germans or French—archeologists, people there on business or traveling for pleasure. One year she had a little house near Smyrna. She liked it there, it seemed

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another life; she liked the donkeys and the goats, liked the peasants and the fig tree in her yard, the almond tree and the olive grove behind.

She had considered making a home for herself—in England, perhaps, but she couldn't get away from a no doubt needless idea that she wasn't to have a home.

She knew some of the people she had been with thought it strange she didn't seem to belong to anybody. Others thought she was fortunate—the English woman who said, "And now, damn it, I have to go back to my family."

As a matter of fact, a good deal of her life had been pleasant. Pleasant seemed the word, rather than happy. Pleasant is on the surface—happiness lies deeper, and things must be right within one's self to be happy.

Aunt Jenifer hadn't seemed to think anything was wrong with her, though she and her aunt never talked about why she was kept away, and seldom spoke of her mother or father or home. It was as if there was to be a new life, and the old one was to go. But it is hard to feel at home in a new life when you are left bewildered about the old one.

It would seem she was more fortunate than if she had remained at home. She had seen a good deal of the world, she had not had to worry about money and had met interesting people. But she was always living other people's lives. She would become acquainted, and the

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new friends appeared to like her, for when they were moving on to some other place often they would suggest, "Why don't you come too?" And as there was no reason for not doing this, she might go with them. She had traveled with a number of people and liked some of them very much. But finally they would go back to their own lives, and then she would be alone for a time, then with other people. Since she was not to go home, it didn't much matter where she was.

In Smyrna she joined some people who were sailing among the Greek islands. She stayed for a time on the island of Andros, and there took Koula. After she had Koula, and must consider bringing up a child, she thought anew of herself as a child, and it made acute all the old homesickness. She terribly wanted to be—not so far away. So she joined the Prestons, archeologists who were going to Yucatan. It was the closest she could come to going home. At least the ocean would not be between.

The Prestons returned to England and she went on into Mexico, and she took Diego. She would make a family of her own. Koula and Diego being themselves in great need of a family, it was natural they get together. She wouldn't have her own children, for she wasn't going to defraud another man as Henri felt she had defrauded him. (How *did* she look—and why did she look that way if she wasn't that way?) Koula and Diego were

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already in the world—and no one to care for them. It seemed quite natural and right they become her children. All three of them had been alone. Now they were together, and no one of them was alone.

Many things went through her mind as she neared home, Koula and Diego eating oranges and looking out the window.

She did have one resentment: Warren had not even told her their father was dead, but just let her hear it that way, from Elfreda Meade, of all people. But now Warren had written her about the house, and cabled, so perhaps he too wanted her to come home. Certainly Father had wanted it, leaving things as he had. If she didn't take the house, Warren wasn't to have it. If she didn't live there, the place would go to the cemetery, as if only she could now save their past from being dead and buried. It was a command upon her, saying: "Lydia, come home." Strange, so very strange, after everything else, but it was as if Father, as best he could, was trying to explain something to her.

And she wanted to understand what he sought to make clear—for then I will not live in the dark, she thought. Then I will not be afraid. You can meet what you know. But to be afraid of what you do not know—like the things the child sees in the dark and cannot reason with. "I've seen through the glass darkly long

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enough. I want to see face to face, and with strength and good-cheer live my life among my kind."

Perhaps Warren would help her. In a few minutes now—*minutes*—she would see her brother. How would he look? How would she look to him? What fun they used to have together. She and Warren—they were the only two left.

Chapter VI

WARREN was there five minutes before the bus would come in. He was very nervous and to put in the time got a coca-cola at the filling station. The court-house was in the next block. You saw it there across the street. Then you turned your back—or at any rate he did. Even yet he didn't care about looking at the court-house.

At home Ivy was in what he called a state. She'd be all right though when the time came. She didn't know what foreigners ate—and were they people or what?

In two minutes now—if the thing was on time—he would see Lydia. Straight as an arrow she was and slim. Most girls looked a mess when they ran. But Lydia ran like a deer. She could—heavens, *she* wasn't coming, not that girl. That girl had been gone nineteen years.

Now the bus was stopping and people beginning to get out. That wasn't Lydia—Lydia would never get *that* fat. He felt all shaky and turned his back, threw down his cigarette and took his time rubbing it out.

Foreigners were getting out, with their emigrant bags and baskets. The town didn't want any more foreigners—not enough work for the Americans. That boy had a Mexican hat.

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Mexican? He gave a start and looked at the woman with the two foreign children. But she was foreign too. Or—*was* she? Not foreign to him were those quick movements which yet had so much grace, nor foreign the dark eyes so alive. With poise she stood there amidst confusion—expectant, eager, a little timid: waiting. He heard her say, in a voice not foreign to English or to him: “We’ll just stand here a moment.”

He stepped up. “Hello, Lydia.”

She turned swiftly and smiled in an eager remembered way. “Warren!”

Hands out, she just held them so an instant, as if not to let the moment go by. “Let’s see! Is it?” She laughed, low and as if delighted. “Yes!”

They stood there as if it couldn’t be true they were looking at each other. “Well!” he broke it. “Welcome home.” He kissed her, not without embarrassment; she put her slender brown hands on his shoulders and kissed him warmly. In her eyes were warm welcoming tears. She was still so slim, so straight.

“I’ll bet you can still run like a deer.”

Her face lighted with pleasure, as if now he really accepted her—back in the old give-and-take. “Wait till we get out home—beat you to the fence!”

“Children!” she turned to them. “This is your Uncle Warren.”

Uncle Warren seemed at a loss for the proper greeting.

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"Yes, yes," she laughed, "these are my children. This is Koula—Koula Chippman, and here is your nephew, Diego Chippman."

Warren found himself gazing at a young Indian who seemed quite unmoved by the encounter.

And as Lydia laughed, in spite of his dismay Warren was thinking her laugh was just the same, it was low and so clear and pure—like a running stream and always as if it came of itself. "We'll get acquainted as time goes on," she said. "A nice thing is, one doesn't have to get acquainted all at once."

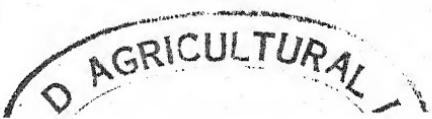
A straw crate was handed down from the top of the bus. "This yours, ma'am?"

"Yes indeed." She turned to her brother. "What do we do now, Warren?"

Yes indeed; what *do* we do now, Warren thought.

He got a boy to take the crate to the car, himself took Lydia's big basket and the two children came along, each with a basket and Lydia with an emigrant bag. The Mexican boy had a blanket slung over his shoulder. One of his own mechanics stood not far off staring open-mouthed.

"We'll go right out home, won't we, Warren? I've been away so long I want to get there just as soon as I can. We can have a sort of picnic lunch; we've brought some avocados—and you'll eat with us, of course you



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will. Couldn't we eat out under the elm, the way you and I used to sometimes between meals?"

About to say, "You're to have lunch at our house," he found he couldn't say it; couldn't take this young Indian and the little dago girl home to Ivy as new relatives, arrive with bags and baskets. Lord! He had thought Lydia would be *worldly*. He thought she'd be more sophisticated than they were.

Perhaps it was better to let her see the place at once, see for herself she couldn't stay there. It would be tough for her—but could he help that?

"All right," he said, "if you'd rather. You and—you and the children wait here and I'll go back to the restaurant and get them to put up some stuff. It will take a few minutes."

And in that time he would telephone Ivy, tell her it would be impossible to come home for lunch. She'd be pretty upset, but she ought to be grateful. He couldn't say much over the phone but he would say there was no cat and no parrot. That ought to let her know there was something worse than a parrot.

"Oh, that's all right," said Lydia agreeably. She seemed to think everything was going just beautifully! "We'll wait in Uncle Warren's nice car, children. Isn't it a beautiful car? And we can look over at the big trees. Those are elms. The court-house looks just the same, doesn't

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it, Warren? I'm glad it's still brick. It's a lovely old building."

Warren, a basket he was about to put in the car arrested midway, could only stare at her. Of all things to say!

"And so do you, Warren. So do you look the same?" She added, softly: "And I'm glad you do."

He wasn't often spoken to so gently. Life with Ivy was pretty business-like. Despite bundles and emigrant children—and the court-house, he went in the place feeling something nice had happened to him, and bought all the good things he could see.

He would have to prepare her. It wouldn't be fair not to give her an idea of what she would find. He must begin to let her know she shouldn't have come and couldn't stay. After they had crossed the creek and were in the gulley he slackened speed—he hadn't been able to resist showing off the car.

"Lydia," he began, "I should have told you more about the place. I—I hadn't thought you would come."

"I was glad to come," she said simply.

"We haven't done anything about getting it ready, because, really, you can't live there."

"Oh, yes, I can," she said. "Father left it to me to live in, so he must have thought I could live there."

"The truth is, it's in miserable condition."

"I can fix it up."

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"No, it wouldn't be worth it. It would take too much money."

"I have plenty of money," she assured him. "Besides what Aunt Jenifer left me, a man gave me a hundred thousand dollars."

As if the car itself were stunned by this sum it almost left the road.

"A man?" he managed to say. "You mean your—your husband?"

"Oh, mercy no," she laughed. "Henri never gave me anything, unless you could call his good-nature a gift."

Now this was just a little too much! "And what did you give this man, in return for a hundred thousand dollars?" he asked coldly.

"That's the funny part of it. I didn't give him anything. Why, it's all right, Warren," she laughed. "He was old enough to be my father. He used to say he might have been my father. He was here once. He used to know Mother."

"Oh my God," Warren said under his breath.

"What did you say, Warren?"

He only shook his head.

"He seemed to have a very beautiful memory of her. He said she was the most lovely woman he had ever known."

Warren's hands gripped hard on the wheel. "What was his name?"

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"Blake. Joseph Blake. He was an engineer, and he was here once years ago, when they thought the railroad was going through back of our house."

"I want you to give the money back!"

"But I couldn't do that. He's dead. I tell you it was all right, Warren. I was surprised, but I thought it was nice of him. He was an elderly gentleman; he had been ill for years, so he seemed even older than he was, and he was going to die soon, and had nobody. I knew him in Rome. We were together a good deal. I was so sorry for him. I used to read to him. He seemed to like me and he thought I was—well, alone. I was, too," Lydia added.

As her brother's face was set, so strange, she said, softly, "Why, Warren, when I was off by myself all those years, wasn't it all right to make friends? Aren't you glad if some people liked me?"

So how could he tell her about the house? He was too shaken to speak. Lydia talked with the children, pointing things out.

Never in his life was he more sorry for anyone than for Lydia when he stopped before the house and she sat looking at it. He could not speak. He reproached himself too much.

"Yes," she said at last, "you're right. It does need repairs."

She did not get out, or speak again for a moment.

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Then she said, more brightly: "It needs paint. Why didn't you ever paint it?"

"It needs paint and shingles and foundation and plaster and everything else you can think of. Come on. We'll turn around and go back. Ivy has lunch ready for you in town, and then you were so insistent on coming out here— But now you see how it is. Give it up, Lydia. The place is too lonely. Don't go in. The old things are all in there and they'll—they'll just make you feel badly. A person can't go back and live in the past like that. And why should you? What good would it do? What good could it do a single person on earth? Make a visit with us, and if you want to stay on," he continued recklessly, so sorry for her, "you can get a place in town."

As still she did not speak: "I'm sorry. I should have told you before."

He thought she was going to give in, for she just sat there looking. Then, "No!" she said, opening the door of the car. "Father left me the place with the understanding I live in it. He must have thought I could live here. He wanted me to. Come, children. We're getting out now. This is home and we're going to fix it all up. It will be fun fixing it up. Take your baskets."

Lydia said almost nothing while they were in the house, only things like, "Please open the windows, Warren." Or, "Let's get some bedding in the sun."

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Then she asked, "Can you take this table out? Let's eat back here where we'll have the sun."

That table, no—not the dining-room table, over which one never-to-be-forgotten night he had found a man bowed—dead.

"Easier to take out the kitchen table," he said.

Soon she had things ready out there in the sheltered place made by the ell of the new wing. They talked of the new wing, which Lydia had never seen—how Father had built it so Mother could have the last sun of the afternoon. "It was nice of Father," Lydia said, and she was like Mother—she clung to that last hour of sunshine, followed it around.

She had found a blue and white table-cloth and the old yellow dishes. She told Diego and Koula to pick some of the field flowers and she put them in a blue pitcher. As they ate the roasted chicken Warren had bought she talked of different ways of cooking chicken—what the Greeks did, and the Mexicans. As soon as they were settled she would cook a Mexican meal for Warren and Ivy. She'd make a *mole*—with chicken and such a sauce as was never before put in the human mouth! She talked of how she loved to eat out-of-doors; she had done it so much she didn't like to eat in a house, and why should one, when it was pleasant outside? "We'll do this every day, won't we, children?"

She hoped it wasn't too late for a little vegetable garden

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—Diego could help with that. They must have herbs for soup, and the little white onions. She asked about the automobile business, about Ivy, and Warren's children. "Just think, I don't even know them." She added, "They must come out and play with their little cousins—if they don't feel too grown-up."

Under his breath Warren muttered: "Well I'll be darned."

"What did you say, Warren?"

"Nothing," he smiled. But what he'd meant was that he wouldn't have believed he could feel so much at ease. He was almost enjoying himself, even while it seemed incredible another meal was being eaten out at the old place—Lydia sitting across from him, the children gnawing drum-sticks—just like any kids.

"What became of Henry Kircher?" she asked.

"He's here. He has their place, over beyond the cemetery."

"Just where he used to live," said Lydia approvingly.

"Some day," she told the children, "we'll walk through the cemetery and go over and see my old friend Henry Kircher, and he will show us all the cows. I can get milk from Henry," she said practically; "unless we get a cow of our own. We use lots of milk."

"And Judge Kircher," said Warren, rather hesitantly, "—Henry's uncle. He wants to see you too."

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"Oh, yes. A friend of Mother and Father's. He used to be here a good deal."

Warren buttered a piece of bread and mumbled: "He has been very good about things."

"I'll go in and see him," said Lydia; "and I'll ask him to visit here again, as he used to. Perhaps he would like to come to the Mexican meal, and Henry must come."

Warren looked at his sister, sitting there hospitably making plans, when any other woman would be in hysterics about the state of the place.

"You're a funny one," he said.

"Me?" She seemed a little disturbed. "What's funny about me?"

He couldn't tell her. It wasn't easy to say. Perhaps it was that she had no resentments. There wasn't any meanness in her. She was so guileless—it made her different.

"Perhaps I'll build two little guest-houses—right out there," she pointed. "I think guest-houses are nice. When you go to visit it's fun to have your own little house. This house shouldn't be built onto any more. It's a funny shape already. So many people have been nice to me, and then there were always partings—one reason or another. There are some of them I'd like to have visit me. They're far away, but they're used to traveling. I wouldn't have met them if they hadn't traveled," she laughed.

The children went running round to explore. "You can

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go up there on the hill," she told them, "but don't disturb the graves."

They watched them doing just what they used to do.

"These children," Warren began, "of course they aren't your own?"

"No. But yes—yes, they are. They're my adopted children."

"I should think you would have adopted Americans."

"Where would I get the Americans?"

"Well, then English—or even French; or even German."

"But these were the children who needed to be adopted. They just came my way. They're nice children. You'll like them."

"They'll seem odd here, I'm afraid."

"Oh, well, what's the difference? We can't all be Americans."

"And who," he asked in a burst of irritation—for Lydia was so damned *reasonable* about the fantastic thing—"who, may I ask, is this Pancho Villa?"

"Why don't you know?" she laughed.

"Just how would I know?"

"But Pancho Villa is our donkey."

"Do you mean to say," he asked very slowly, "that you are bringing a donkey up here—all the way from Mexico?"

"It will be a hard trip for him, but he's strong."

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He stared at her. "But, Lydia, no one has a donkey here."

"He will be quite a character in the neighborhood. People will like him. We love Pancho—all of us. You will too, when you know him."

As Warren's face held little hope of a growing love for Pancho Villa, she asked gently: "Did you never look closely into a donkey's face? It is so beautiful—so patient, trusting. Pancho is like a big gentle dog. The children ride him, and I do too. Of course you haven't been with donkeys as I have. I've loved many donkeys, and always hated to leave them when I went somewhere else. So I decided there would be one donkey I wouldn't leave. Made up my mind one donkey was to have a good life."

Lydia lit a cigarette and said, "Christ rode a donkey."

After a little: "I think we'll sleep outdoors tonight," she said. "We can bring out mattresses and just roll up in blankets. We're used to that, and the house does need airing. And it needs to be cleaned."

"Come now, Lydia," he urged, "give it up. You can't live like this—and why should you? It's too desolate here."

"It won't be desolate long," she assured him. "And you'll help me, won't you, Warren, because I don't know the ways of things here. What I need is cleaning women, and men to work for me."

She was stubborn, and she was brave, too. Well, yes,

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damn it all, he would help her. What else could he do, with her persisting like this? Ivy could look up some cleaning women; it wasn't going to do Ivy any harm to be good to Lydia. Lydia was a darn sight more interesting than Ivy's friends—always talking about the same things, forever fussing about what somebody else was going to think of them. Lydia had style, too—in spite of her queer ways. Her ways didn't seem queer to her. She was herself. She was somebody—you could see that as you saw her hands move and heard her speak. She could put you at your ease. It was a relief—that's what it was. He felt all bucked-up until he began to think of the things he ought to talk to Lydia about.

"There's a lot I must tell you, Lydia," he began. "I—I don't know just how much you know about things, and that's my fault, but—"

She saw it was hard for him. "Yes, Warren, there are things I want to know. But maybe you'd rather wait until we're more used to each other again; and when I've made the old place more cheerful it won't be so hard to talk of the past."

He was so grateful to her. "It's good of you," he said, and felt that she was his sister and that he loved her.

But when he had to go, after doing a number of things, he again tried to dissuade her from staying—for at the last it seemed too utterly dreary leaving her there alone. But again finding he could not break down her resolu-

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tion he promised to have things she would need sent out from town.

"But you'll want someone here with you. You shouldn't be here alone."

"I'll want someone to work for me. Perhaps Ivy can help me there. But we'll be all right here tonight. I want to get used to it, and I'm not afraid. I've lived in lots of queer places."

So he left Lydia there with Koula and Diego; they all waved to him as he drove away. He went back to town wondering what Lydia would be thinking about that night, wondering how she could stand it, and why she did. She had nerve. No one could say she didn't have nerve—though, funny thing, it didn't seem to occur to her it took any nerve. Why in heaven's name she *wanted* to stay there he couldn't figure out. But he'd stand by her—she could count on that. And he wasn't going to take anything off of anybody about those children. As for the donkey—well, if the rest of them didn't like the donkey they could just let the donkey alone. What was it she said? "Christ rode a donkey."

Chapter VII

HE had a bad time with Ivy, who was indignant because she had prepared a lunch which wasn't eaten and cried when told Diego and Koula were children who had been adopted into the family. And when she demanded, "Who is this Pancho Villa? *Another child?*" and learned that Pancho was a donkey, she declared: "There is just one thing to do about it. Lydia is crazy and must be told she can *not* stay here! We've had enough."

But Warren went on to say Lydia was making plans to get the house in shape, and as soon as possible she was going to give a Mexican party for him and Ivy and the Kirchers. While Ivy was still gasping at this he said she was going to put up guest-houses and invite people from Europe and Asia Minor and Mexico to come and visit her.

"Warren!" she cried out, "are *you* crazy too?"

"Not that I know of."

"But can't you see—have you *forgotten*—can't you see that under the circumstances—"

Warren said Lydia had a right to do it if she wanted to; she did want to and was setting out with a great deal of spirit.

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"But why does she *want* to live there?"

"You've got me there. I wouldn't want to. But the funny thing is, Lydia seems to have more affection for the past than any of us."

"I don't see why anybody should have affection for it!"

"Well, I do," he said.

She regarded him anxiously. "Warren, you've changed. You seem to have forgotten—all the talk."

"Damn the talk. I'm sick of it. I've been tied up in that talk long enough."

But Ivy did not respond to this emancipation. "If you have no regard for your own family," she said stiffly, "you might consider your sister herself. I mean the money. It isn't practical. Lydia doesn't know what it will cost and you should tell her. Your Aunt Jenifer wasn't rich."

"Now there we needn't worry," he assured her. "Aside from Aunt Jenifer, Lydia had another legacy."

"Who from?"

"Someone she met in traveling."

"Well that's *very* strange."

"She evidently made warm friends. You'll understand better when you see her. She was left a hundred thousand dollars by someone she met in her travels."

"Why I never *heard* of such a thing! It doesn't seem right!"

"It's a very nice sum of money—wish I'd traveled more

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myself. Now, Ivy, will you go out there in the morning, with two stout cleaning women—mops, pails, soap—you know the things one cleans with, so Lydia can sleep in the house? Tonight she's sleeping out in the yard."

"Out in the *yard*?"

"She says she's used to it. But it may rain any time."

Ivy said again that Lydia was crazy; Warren was crazy, all the Chippmans were crazy, that you couldn't get cleaning women, either stout or thin, and she did *not* run around with mops and pails. Hard enough to get people to work in her own house! Elfreda was having a bridge-luncheon the next day and for *her* part she never wanted to set foot in that house again!

Warren said he was sleepy.

Ivy would be all right, once she had had her say. Curiosity would get her there, if nothing else.

He didn't go right to sleep; he was wondering what Lydia was thinking about.

Sure enough, first thing next morning he heard Ivy telephoning for cleaning women. She had an injured manner at breakfast, but asked if the radiator in her car had been fixed; she had no desire to be stalled on a country road with mops and pails.

He didn't go out that day, for if it were left to Ivy she might think it was her doings and feel better about it. And he had faith in Lydia. Maybe Lydia would get Ivy. Seemed to him she could get almost anyone.

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Ivy came back in the evening declaring she was dead tired and adding, in a superior way: "You'd be surprised at all we accomplished."

"How did you like Lydia?" he asked.

She sat down, saying she ached in every bone. Never in her whole life had she done so much work.

"Lydia? Well, the trouble is you can't *help* but like Lydia."

"Yes," he agreed, "that is the trouble."

"And it might not be so bad if it weren't for those children. *They* will be the talk of the town. Why Warren—that little girl is *Greek*. Now you *know*—"

"Yes?"

"If you were going to adopt a child, why take a Greek?"

"They were once a noble race—I am told."

"Well they're not noble now. And the boy is half Indian. And she calls him Chippman!"

"Did you and Lydia talk about things?"

"No, we talked about the house—getting it cleaned—though what's the good cleaning it when workmen will have to tear it all up? You touch the plaster and it comes off. Really, I felt sorry for Lydia—though she's so impractical. I've never in my life seen a more impractical woman."

"We ate out-of-doors," she went on. "It was rather pleasant. Lydia made a nice dish from the meat I brought

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out, with vegetables. She says they do it in Greece. She says when you go about in strange countries it's interesting to know how their dishes are made. If she liked a thing she found out how to do it, for you never know when you are going to have a kitchen of your own."

"Rather sweet of her," said Warren, "to care about cooking when she had no home of her own."

"Yes," agreed Ivy; "I thought of that too."

When it became known Lydia Chippman was actually going to stay, that Warren was engaging workmen to restore the place, feeling was divided between curiosity about Lydia and wondering what was going to become of the dead of the next twenty years. You would have to count on her living at least twenty years.

The workmen who returned to town at night held out little hope of her becoming discouraged and giving it up. She was spending a good deal of money, they said; certainly didn't look as though she had any idea of having the place torn down. She had some very good ideas, too, and no one was putting things over on her—she wasn't throwing her money away. She had a Mexican kid with her, and a little girl who was Greek, and she said their name was Chippman. They seemed all right though, made houses of thrown away stuff, just like American children.

One evening the men had a good story to tell, for a

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donkey had arrived; his name was Pancho Villa, and the children rode him all round the edge of the cemetery. One of the men took his little boy out to play with the Mexican and the donkey; later the plasterer did this too, and the children picnicked together and all rode this Pancho Villa.

Miss Chippman was very nice to work for. She made coffee every noon and often added to their lunch with things she had baked herself. She was a darn good cook. The men working out at the old Chippman place became less and less concerned with the dead of the next twenty years.

In those first days Lydia thought less about the dead of her own family than she would have expected herself to do. She worked all day and went to bed so tired she slept. "Later," she would say to thoughts that came. First she must get home ready to live in. That and the children took all her time—there wasn't even much time to consider the strangeness of being there. This was a task that had been set her. She would be about it, and after that perhaps she would come to know why she was here.

Things that would need to be looked through carefully—as papers, she set aside. She and Warren could go through them together, and then they would talk about the things he had to tell her.

She kept all the old things that could be restored, but ugly things of a later time she threw out. She was quite

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realistic about this. So far as possible she wanted the house to be as it had been, but it was not to be dreary. She used some cheerful things of her own. The Mexican blankets seemed not out of keeping. They had a home-made look.

The new plaster was a soft yellow that made its own sunshine, for the house needed more light. Amazing how much more inviting this made the rooms; there was a glow now where before it had been dull and cold. She found that the dining-room table was maple. You'd never have guessed it. Now when that last sun Mother had loved fell upon it there were nice lights.

There were times, after the workmen had gone and the children put to bed, when she felt the past alive there, more real than anything of the moment. In the sitting-room she could see her mother sewing near the lamp and Father reading the paper. She would hear her mother say, "It's time for you children to go to bed." And when she would now light her candle and go up the stairs sometimes she would again be the little girl Lydia and wish her mother would come in and kiss her good-night. Mother had rarely done this. She wondered why. It seemed so natural to love your children. She loved Diego and Koula, though she had not had them when they were babies. If your child had once been a baby in your arms, if you had tended her when she was sick, watched her take her first step and heard her speak her

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first word—how could you help feeling near to her as she grew older?

Strange how long a look could live. A look was a fleeting thing—an instant and it was gone; yet it could live for years. Anxious and unhappy glances had left ghosts in this house and when they were too much with her she turned resolutely to measuring for curtains or mending the children's clothes.

One thing had hurt her deeply. All the furniture had been taken out of her room. She found most of it later in the attic and she got an idea her room had been used by some man who worked there. There were other rooms that could have been given him. All the years she had gone on thinking of her old room just as it was the afternoon she closed the door and went away with her Aunt Jenifer. In many other beds she had seemed to be in that bed by the window, looking up toward the cemetery; long after she had ceased to see them so, she had again seen the stars through the elm. But her walnut spool-bed was stacked against a wall in the attic, her dresser, her table and little rocker—piled there as if no one wanted to see them.

At first she could not bring them back. But one cheerful morning—there was a nice breeze, the children were playing store in the apple tree (she had told them she and their Uncle Warren used to do that), the man who was shingling whistled gaily and Mr. Hansen told stories

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about his neighbor the policeman who was afraid of cats—that morning it occurred to her perhaps Father had broken up her room because it made him sad to see her things when she was not there to use them. So she had them brought back, and now she again slept in the spool-bed and looked through the elm to the stars.

Warren came out often to see how things were going, and Ivy came too, and said she wouldn't have believed the dismal old place could look so cheerful.

One day Lydia said to her, "I found this old picture of Mother. Wasn't she lovely then?"

"Yes," said Ivy, and moved away, saying: "I don't think this quilt is worth washing. It would go to pieces."

But Lydia didn't turn to the quilt. She continued to look at the picture. What was it Mr. Blake had said that day in Rome? "She was the most beautiful women I ever knew." He murmured: "It wasn't like any other beauty," —and his eyes seemed dwelling with this beauty he had known.

"Mr. Swartz is going to repair this chair very carefully," she told Ivy, "because this is the one Father always sat in."

"It's not worth repairing," said Ivy.

"It wouldn't be, except that it was Father's."

Ivy said, slowly: "You are a very strange person."

"Me?" said Lydia. "Why, no. Why, Ivy, how am I strange?"

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"Oh for heaven's *sake*," said Ivy, in an exasperated way she had at times.

In leaving that day Ivy said: "You must meet some of my friends, Lydia."

"I'd like to," said Lydia, "when I'm a little farther along with all this. Already," she laughed, "I know Mr. Swartz and Mr. Hansen the plasterer, and Joe Smith and a man called Fritz. I know Mrs. Carsons, who washes better than anyone I ever knew, and Addie. I know a good deal about their families too. Mr. Hansen's wife is going to have another baby. This will make five."

Her first caller, aside from Warren and Ivy, was Henry Kircher. It was nice of Henry to come at the hour that could be a little lonely. The workmen were quitting early today—because some material hadn't come. They were putting their tools in the unused room that had been the old kitchen, were washing their hands and talking about the movies. Mr. Hansen was going to take his wife that night, but Fritz would stay home and listen to the radio. You could take your shoes off and none of the big-wigs giving the program knew you had them off. It might be the President even, and he wouldn't know you had them off.

Much jovial talk, but soon they would drive away, the sun would go and she and Diego and Koula would be there alone. Addie helped her through the day, but couldn't stay nights because of her own family. Just as

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this cheerful activity was dying down she heard a dog barking in high excitement and a man call: "Hey! Didn't you ever see a donkey before?"

A black-and-white dog was barking at Pancho, and a man was swinging over the cemetery fence. She knew by a remembered gait—rather slow, and with a certain swinging from side to side, that it was Henry.

She started up the hill to welcome him.

"Hello, Lydia," he called in his slow, full voice.

"Hello, Henry."

After they had shaken hands they stood looking at one another.

"You're Lydia, all right," he said.

"So are you Henry,"—and he was, the same kind face, though heavier now.

"Well," he said after a moment, "shall we play tag around the graves?"

"Diego and Koula do that now. But I don't think they disturb anybody. We didn't used to, did we?"

"No, I don't think the old folks minded. When I'm there myself I'd just as soon as not have kids playing around.

"But the cemetery is very sore at you now," he laughed.

"I know. It's too bad. The dead do have to be buried. Perhaps I can do something about it. But you see," she

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said, as they walked toward the house, "Father wanted me to come home and take the place."

Henry didn't speak for a moment. "It was game of you," he said.

"Why, no," she said. "After all, it's home."

"You've been away so long. Most people would have forgotten."

"I didn't forget," said Lydia.

"Well, I'm glad you didn't. I'm glad you're here."

"I'm glad," she said.

She showed him what she had been doing, and they walked all around outside, talking of what the fruit trees needed. He would spray them for her himself. He didn't trust many people when it came to trees. This wasn't the best place for the vegetable garden, even if it did get the morning sun. It was too near that poplar, you'd be surprised how far its roots went. He'd send over some cow-manure. He had plenty of that, he laughed. And he could give her some tomato plants and things, because it was late now to begin at the beginning. She'd better take out this rose; it was diseased. The peonies looked starved, but they might come back, coaxed along. Yes, the honeysuckle was all right. Hard to kill honeysuckle, once it got going.

Then they went inside. Henry said he had never taken to tea in the afternoon, but you could get him to drink

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coffee any time you tried. "That's because my folks were German," he said.

"I know," she laughed. "There were some English words your father just wouldn't say."

"He was stubborn. He thought you could say it better in German."

They sat in the kitchen, for sitting-room and dining-room were pretty much torn up. The coffee had a homey cheerful smell, and they ate cookies and talked of how they used to do that.

"But the kitchen was on the other side then," said Henry.

"Yes, at first I was sorry, but Father built this so Mother could have the afternoon sun." She paused, thinking of this. "And now you and I sit in it.

"Father was always thinking of things he could do for Mother," she went on, as Henry was silent. She wanted to take Mother and Father into this late afternoon sun, a neighbor's visit, the good smell of coffee.

"Yes, that's right," Henry agreed, reaching for another cookie and slowly breaking it.

"I had thought you'd be the grand lady now, Lydia, living away so long. I didn't suppose you'd want to sit in the kitchen and talk over old times."

"Why, Henry," she said, "I've wanted that more than anything."

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She told him about the children, who were playing in sight.

"You're a funny one, Lydia."

"Me? Funny?"

"Yes, you are. You were always funny."

"What's funny about me?" she asked a little anxiously.

"I don't know. But you're not like the rest of the Chippmans." And suddenly Henry glowed red, as if fearing he had offended either the Chippmans or her.

"I mean," he went on, "most women wouldn't think they could adopt foreign children."

"But you see foreigners aren't so foreign to me. I've lived with them as much as with Americans."

"That's right too," he laughed.

She was thinking it was too bad Henry hadn't children of his own. He had never married, Warren said. He would have been so good to a family.

He told her his uncle would want to see her; the judge was in Detroit just then.

"Warren says he has been so kind about our affairs," said Lydia, and again Henry seemed confused. Well, he was always a little shy, a little awkward; it was a nice thing about him.

She and the children walked up the hill with him. He said his dog Sally had pups and he would give them one. And they must come over and see the calves.

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How nice to have Henry as a neighbor, with only the cemetery between them, just as it used to be.

After he and his dog disappeared between the monuments it was as if his visit had left a glow, like the glow the sun was leaving, and feeling strong within, she thought of going to find her mother and father's graves. She hadn't done this yet, wanting to have the house more cheerful first, so it would seem they were in the house as well as in their graves. Now she felt like going, but it was time for the children's supper.

Chapter VIII

THE second day after that was Saturday and the men stopped work at noon. Addie was still there; she lived half a mile up the road and her husband would stop for her as he came from work in town. *He* didn't take Saturday afternoon off—but these union men, *they* didn't hurt themselves!

Addie was very busy in the kitchen, leaving things for Sunday because she didn't come Sundays. She had her little girl with her today and Lily and Diego and Koula were painting a piece of beaverboard they had stood up against the wood-shed. "And a perfect mess they are making of themselves," said Addie indulgently.

Pancho stood a little way off looking at the house. He looked lonely. Lydia took him a carrot and rubbed his nose. "Want to go some place?" she asked.

Then it was she got the idea of riding Pancho in to see Ivy. She had been thinking of what Henry said about the cemetery being indignant at her, and it had occurred to her she might give the cemetery some of her land. The fence could be moved farther down the hill, leaving ample room for her and more for the dead. Father wouldn't have minded, because the cemetery was his

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second choice. Ultimately they would have it all; they might as well have some of it now.

She walked up there to see just what could be done. Quite a little walk it was; there was lots of space, she wouldn't feel anything had been taken from her. Standing by the fence she looked back to the house and wondered why some people felt the place shut in and lonely. "The little hills rejoice on every side." They didn't come in too close, and they were so friendly. As a child she had loved the shadows sliding downhill and the first gleam of morning sun on the crest had always made her want to clap her hands. Sometimes they were like big patient animals. A place right out in the open wasn't your own place. You knew more about the sun here than if you had it all the time. A long time you could see it coming and going—it was now here, now there. You could walk out of it and then walk back into it. You could run up and down these gentle hills and through the twisting valleys between them. The hills were fun and they were company and they were beautiful. Here were intimacies. It had a pattern—the house set amidst these waves that had paused. Yes, the hills were waves that had paused. This had always remained her idea of what home should be—a little shut away from the world, not inaccessible, but sheltered. One's own. All the years away her spirit had held it as her own,

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even after it was denied her. One's spirit can't be denied what is one's own.

And to her the cemetery had never made it somber. She had liked to think of the dead resting there after their days in the world. What was wrong with that?

She was pleased with her new idea of letting them come a little farther down the hill; this way she wouldn't be excluding anyone, so it seemed as it should be. She'd talk it over with Warren and Ivy, and it would be fun to ride Pancho, making it an expedition. He had followed her. "You won't be afraid of the automobiles, will you, Pancho?" He swung his head, getting off a fly, but seeming to say he wouldn't be afraid.

Addie did not approve of the expedition. At six Joe could drive Miss Chippman into town if she had to go. But Lydia said it was such a nice afternoon she felt like starting right out. Addie promised to be there until she came back. Yes, the children would be all right, messing around together, and she was making a raisin-tart for them. But nothing could hire *her* to ride a donkey into town. Especially if she had a brother in the automobile business. Why couldn't he get her a car at cost?

He had spoken of it, Lydia assured her. But meanwhile she and Pancho would have a little trip, as they used to in Mexico. Pancho was a fast-stepping donkey; her brother lived at this edge of town. It was less than two miles to go.

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They went along pleasantly, meeting no one at first, as this was not a much-traveled road. Lydia sat well back on the wide saddle, her feet swaying gently against Pancho, and in low voice singing one of the monotonous songs the men who rode donkeys and mules in Greece and Turkey sang as they journeyed. It recalled many pleasant mule trips, up mountain and across plain.

Then they met a car, which slowed, as if in astonishment. Pancho went by in a bored manner.

It was the other people who seemed disconcerted, as they neared town. "I suppose we do look funny to them," thought Lydia, but without embarrassment, for this seemed natural enough to her, and very pleasant.

But she was glad when she saw Warren's house in the next block—too many cars now for easy donkey going. It was one of the best-looking houses on the street. She didn't believe she would want any of these houses for herself; somehow they gave an idea you were to act in a certain way and do what everybody else did. But she was glad Warren had done so well. He had been good to her since she came back, and Ivy too. She liked Ivy.

As she turned in the driveway she saw cars parked there, and on the porch were four or five women with Ivy. They were all peering at her and Pancho. She waved to Ivy, who didn't move at first. She was sorry there was company for she wanted to talk over this thing about the cemetery, and where would she tether Pancho?

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She saw a post that would do. It seemed strange to leave him there among the handsome cars, as if he were somehow being discredited, and as she tied him she gave a pat and said, "You're all right."

Ivy was coming down the steps now; her face seemed flushed. "Why—Lydia," she began, and then said very brightly: "How nice to see you."

As they turned to the others Ivy laughed, as if it were a great joke: "You don't mean you've ridden that donkey all the way from the country?"

"Yes," Lydia answered simply, adding: "Pancho and I travel very well together."

She introduced Lydia to her friends. As she came to Elfreda Meade she said: "But I believe you know each other."

"Yes," said Elfreda, "we were in school together."

"In the same class," said Lydia, and thought of the time she had slapped her.

"And later we met in Rome," said Elfreda, rather tartly.

"It was Rome, wasn't it?" agreed Lydia.

After a little Ivy became more at ease, for Lydia was so unabashed at having been discovered arriving on a donkey that it was as if there were something about Lydia permitted her to arrive as she pleased.

She was wearing a dress of some Mexican stuff, the waist close-fitting and the skirt rather full. She could

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wear it for she was so slim and straight. Something about her—not her clothes, herself—made the others look a little commonplace. As she talked, pleasantly answering polite inquiries about progress with her house, she took off her scarf and pushed her hand back over her short dark hair. Rich chestnut color it was—abundant, soft; a wave given by God and not the hairdresser—how Ivy envied her *that*. And the shape of her head—so finely formed, distinguished, beautiful. Everything she did had a certain style and grace. She was so cool and poised, and yet friendly. Ivy saw her friends regarding Lydia with growing interest—liking her, it seemed. She suggested foreign things, ways they did not know—yet so simple and easy to know.

It occurred to Lydia that after all this would not be a bad time to speak of the cemetery. They all lived here—they all had dead and would have more dead, so this concerned them.

As she took a cigarette she began: "About the cemetery—"

She had thought they would be interested, but something in the quality of the interest made her pause an instant. Everyone was looking at her—except Ivy, who brushed something from her skirt.

Lydia laughed: "I have no wish to crowd the dead. There should be land enough on the earth for both the living and the dead. So I was thinking, Ivy, that I might

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give some land to the cemetery. The fence could be moved farther down the hill, and then no one would find it necessary to come out and kill me in the night in order to get a grave.

"Don't you think it's a good idea?" she asked, as there was some perfunctory laughter, but no one spoke.

"I think it's a *very* good idea," Mrs. Burroughs, a woman with a broad kind face, said heartily. "It's just awfully good of you, and I'm sure the town will be grateful."

Warmed by this, Lydia expanded: "You know, before my father died—"

But she was stopped, stopped by the changed face into which she was looking—the shocked look, the surprise which was followed by something like consternation. And as she looked from one to another she saw in each face this look of amazement, and in Ivy's face, now white, it seemed she saw horror.

But how absurd! What was the *matter* with them? Wasn't it possible to speak naturally of the dead?

"Before my father died," she began again—but it was impossible to go on. She was speaking into a frozen world. And suddenly, she had no idea why, she was afraid.

"But doubtless you know the arrangement," she managed to say.

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"Yes," murmured Mrs. Burroughs. "And I do think," she said resolutely, "that it's most generous of you."

Yet even this kind face could not conceal its dismay. The face of Elfreda Meade made no such attempt. And within Lydia the fear grew, fear of she knew not what.

After a little she said she must go. Donkey-back wasn't fast traveling and Addie would be waiting.

"If there were some way of getting your animal back," said Mrs. Burroughs, "I'd like to drive you out home."

Lydia thanked her but said she would be all right with Pancho.

"Wait until Warren comes," said Ivy, though she was still pale and her voice seemed forced. "He can have the donkey taken home and you stay for dinner."

"Thank you, Ivy, but I must go."

Ivy went with her to untie Pancho. Lydia did not get on him, as if not wanting to now; she began leading him down the drive and Ivy walked with her.

"Oh, *Lydia*," she murmured, "why *did* you? Why did you say that before my friends?"

"Say what?" asked Lydia sharply, bewildered and out of patience, though most of all afraid. "Can't I speak of my own father, even if he is dead?"

"But he— Why, Lydia, what's the use *pretending*? They all *know*. Everyone here knows."

"Knows what?" asked Lydia.

"But *you* know. You *know*."

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"I do *not* know," she said. "I do not know what you are talking about!"

"Lydia!" Ivy gasped. "Can that be *true*? You mean to say—you are telling me—?"

"I mean to say I don't know what you are talking about!"

"O-h," breathed Ivy. "Why, this is terrible! Why, we never dreamed—"

"What is terrible? What is it I don't know? What are you talking about?"

Ivy glanced back at the porch. "I certainly can't tell you here," she said, shying a little away from Pancho, who was ready to be off.

"Lydia! Don't go out there! Don't go out there alone—not now. Wait for Warren. There seems to be a misunderstanding. Warren will have to talk with you."

"The children would be alone," she replied. "I must get back to them. If Warren has anything to say to me he can come out tonight and say it!"

She swung herself onto the donkey, came down with her heels more sharply than he expected. He jumped, and Lydia called an abrupt "Good-by!"

Chapter IX

AS soon as they were out of town and she could direct Pancho by the calls he knew she got down off him for now the expedition was spoiled and it seemed foolish to be riding him. She went as fast as she could induce him to go. She must get home—and find out.

She would keep saying, “What is the *matter* with them?”—and all the time she was afraid. She was moving in a world she did not at all understand.

Riding the donkey must have tired Miss Chippman, Addie thought, and she was glad she had the children’s supper ready. Then Joe came for her. She had to go.

“I declare,” she said, “I hate to leave you here alone—till Monday morning.”

“That’s all right,” Miss Chippman assured her. “I am all right,” she said, several times. But Addie thought she seemed more tired than days she had worked much harder. It was that donkey, and it wasn’t nice of her brother, she told Joe. Pity if he couldn’t get her a car, when she was fixing up the place and being so cheerful. She was good to those children, too. Americans couldn’t be treated any better. She’d tell Chippmans or anybody else!

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"Children," Lydia said, "I want you to stay here alone just a little while. Mother has something to do. It isn't dark and I'll not be far or gone long. You won't be afraid, will you?"

Koula proposed they all go together.

Not this time, she told them.

Diego said he was never afraid.

"I know," she said.

So Lydia started out to find her father.

She would find out now. Of *course* he was there—beside Mother, and why did they all act like that because you spoke of a father who was dead? Perhaps she didn't understand Americans any more. She had been so much with people who spoke easily of the dead. And why shouldn't one? They could do it about her, when she was gone. They could say, "Before Lydia died—" and she'd be glad to be spoken of—she knew she would.

But all the while grew a fear of something more than that, something she didn't at all understand. She hurried up the hill to find her father.

She remembered her grandfather and grandmother's graves; they used to take flowers there. She could find that lot. And there had been waiting places, where Mother and Father would be.

But she became confused. There were so many new graves she lost her way. She felt lost among the dead

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and it unnerved her and she went stumbling around uncertainly.

Then she saw the monument on which was the name Chippman.

Beside the older Chippmans she found a headstone marked "Hertha—Wife of John Chippman." She did not wait to read what it said—the dates. She looked beside it—stood looking down at a place still waiting for a grave.

She went to each grave marked Chippman and each time that was not her father—name—dates—were wrong.

She went back to the space beside her mother. Perhaps they had not put up his headstone. Perhaps Warren had neglected it. She knelt and felt the earth. Nothing told her anyone rested beneath this earth.

Her father was not buried beside her mother.

A long time she just stood there. And when she began moving about it was in panic. She went amongst the graves of other families—looking—and under her breath she was saying, "Father! Where are you?" And when she found she had called aloud, "Father!" she was terrified and did not know how to get back home.

Then she saw a man coming through the graveyard. That was Henry!

She ran to him. "Henry! Where is my father? Why is he not buried beside Mother?"

Henry stood speechless. "*What?* What did you say?" he asked when he could speak.

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"You know what I said! Tell me!" She took his arm, shaking it, though she could see he was carrying tomato plants for her. "What does this mean? Why is Father not buried beside Mother? He would want to be—and you know it! What have you done with him? Speak to me now! You must speak to me!"

"Yes—yes, Lydia," he tried to soothe her, "I will speak to you. It seems you don't understand."

"No, I don't understand. And I'm tired of being in the dark. I can't stand it any more—the dark. Tell me, Henry. You will tell me?"

Henry said: "Yes. Why, yes. But I think Warren had better tell you."

"But Warren hasn't. Warren hasn't told me anything."

"Well I think that's pretty rotten of him!"

"Yes. But perhaps not. I said we'd wait—till the house was more cheerful. But I didn't know—I didn't know—what *is* it I didn't know?"

He had taken her arm and was urging her down the hill toward the Chippman place. "All right, Lydia, I'll tell you. But not here."

She stopped. "Yes. Here. I've waited long enough. You can tell me right now!"

"Well, you see, Lydia," he began, "something happened. Your father—"

Then he stood taut, listening. He said, "There's War-

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ren's car now—just turning in. See? Warren is here. He's come to tell you."

When they were nearer the house: "It won't be easy, Lydia. It will be very hard. I'm glad you're brave."

"I'm not."

"Oh, yes, you are. You were always brave. Remember the time our bull chased you?"

She tried to laugh.

He handed her the tomato plants. Warren was standing down there looking up at them. "I'll leave you now. Heel them in."

"What?"

"Oh, never mind,"—as if disgusted with himself for thinking of tomato plants. "Keep them wet. I'll come over tomorrow and plant them."

"Thank you, Henry," she said, and went on down to meet Warren.

They made no attempt at usual greetings. "I'll get the children to bed," she said.

"I'll wait out here," Warren said to her.

"You'll have to come in," she told him when she came down. "It's beginning to rain."

"I hadn't noticed," he said.

They went in the dining-room and Warren sat on a chair placed against the wall, near the door. She sat at the table, her palms down upon it.

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She did not delay. "Warren," she asked, "why is Father not buried beside Mother?"

Warren looked as one might look when slightly paralyzed. "Speak to me! I have a right to know. Where is Father buried?"

"Why, Lydia," he said slowly, "he isn't buried anywhere."

She lifted her hands from the table, clasped them tight together. "Why not?" she asked. Then, groping for something that would explain it, "Was he drowned?"

"No, no," said her brother, as if wearily impatient with such an idea, "he wasn't drowned. He isn't buried—for the same reason you aren't buried."

A pause. Then very slowly he said: "He isn't buried because he isn't dead."

Lydia couldn't say anything, because she couldn't believe it. For some years now in her mind her father had been dead. Her mind couldn't make him alive.

"Where is he?" she finally asked.

"It's about a hundred miles from here. Oh I thought you *knew*," he cried, as if he couldn't bear the way she sat there, so still. "When you wrote like that—of course I thought you knew! About a hundred miles from here," he repeated. "No, I don't know that it is a hundred."

"And why," she asked slowly, "is he a hundred miles from here?"

"It's a good place. The best we could find."

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"What kind of a place?"

"It's a—a private place. It's a sanatorium."

"Father is sick?"

"No, he isn't sick. He's pretty well. He plays chess with the doctor."

"Warren," she cried out, "I'm tired of this! Tired asking questions I shouldn't have to ask! If Father isn't sick—why is he in a place for the sick?"

"It's better than the State Asylum—where he was the first year."

"State Asylum." Lydia said it to herself. Said, "Asylum—Asylum," as if to find out what it meant.

"State Asylum for what?" she asked.

"For the insane."

She made only one movement. The hands clasped before her went to her breast and pressed there.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Lydia! Never in my whole life—so sorry. And after you've fixed up the place—" he cried rather wildly. "After—"

"You are telling me that Father is insane?"

"No," said Warren firmly; "he is not insane."

"Don't you think, Warren," she said, more bitterly than she had ever spoken, "that it's about time to stop leaving me in the dark? Now you can just tell me and tell me straight out! Nothing you say makes sense. If Father isn't insane why is he in a place for the insane?"

"It was kindness. Consideration. Pull."

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"*Kindness*—to be called insane?"

"It was better than the penitentiary. It seemed—better than death."

In that room there was no move or sound. Until she asked: "What did Father do?"

"He killed a man."

"I don't believe it," said Lydia promptly.

"You'll have to believe it. Father never denied it. He walked right into town and told it. God! I believe it. I was *here*. I went through the whole thing. Day after day—I wish you'd move! He was sitting right where you're sitting now."

"Who was?" she asked tonelessly.

"*He* was. When I got out here with Judge Kircher. His head on the table. Dead. I wish you'd move."

But Lydia made no move. What difference did it make—whether she moved or not? It was something else made a difference—something she had to ask. It seemed she didn't get anything without asking it.

"Why did Father kill this man?"

"It was—about Mother. You might know that."

"Mother! But Mother had been dead a long time."

"She wasn't dead for Father. He was still protecting her."

"*Protecting* her? Protecting her against what?"

Suddenly Warren broke into violence, and as if it were a relief. "Against the things this cur was saying—saying

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to Father—threatening to say to others if Father wouldn't sign a dishonest paper giving him what wasn't his. It was blackmail—dirty blackmail, using Mother, who was dead. So Father went in the other room and got his gun, protecting Mother, as he had always protected her. And damn it I'd have done the same thing!"

He got up, moved around a little, then sat down at the table and spoke more quietly. "Father wouldn't use her name, wouldn't tell why he'd done it—only told Judge Kircher, who told me. But he didn't have to tell it. Plenty knew. This rat had already told his swaggering lies. It was a lie!"—his voice rose again and his fist pounded the table. "Mother never— He never—" But there his voice broke and he stopped.

Lydia asked: "Who was he?"

"At one time he was the hired man here. He lived in the house. He claimed—"

"Warren," she broke in, "did he sleep in my room?"

"Oh, what has *that* to do with it?" he cried impatiently. "Yes, as a matter of fact I believe he did."

"Why, Lydia,"—for she looked as though she had been struck, "is that so very important?"

She shook her head, though she was biting her lips. "No, I suppose it isn't important—to anyone else."

She looked around the room—at the freshly tinted walls, the little print curtains she had put up the day before. Coming back to bring the old place to life! Com-

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ing to find the past—when murder and shame were the past!

Then Father wasn't dead. He was alive—a hundred miles from here. He played chess with the doctor, when in her mind he had been dead. It was impossible to believe that even then he might be eating his supper—walking out into the evening—setting up the chessmen. Talking; maybe even laughing, and then going to bed.

"Warren," she asked, "why did Father bring me back?"

"But, Lydia," he returned gently, "did Father bring you back?"

"Why, yes," she said. "He said to me, 'Come back, Lydia.' He said it in the way he left the place. He made it so clear to me. If I didn't live here the house was to be torn down. The place would become the cemetery. It seemed his way of saying, 'Now you must come home.'"

"I don't think," said Warren, speaking carefully, "that he thought you would come home."

"Then why did he do it? He must have wanted me to come—leaving me the place if I would make it my home. Don't you think he wanted me to come home?"

"I don't know," her brother said.

"But then—if not—then it's as if he really were insane. If he didn't think I would—didn't want me to—then why did he leave it like that? As a command upon me;

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as a—a deep request. That's what I thought it—a deep request."

He didn't speak and some time she sat thinking before she asked: "Doesn't it seem that way to you?"

"I don't know," was all Warren could say.

"When did he do this—about the house? After he was—declared insane?"

"I think it was about three months after—after it happened. Told Judge Kircher he wanted to make disposition of his property. There was no one to contest it, so it was very simple, just a paper signed. You may be sure of one thing: Father wasn't insane then and never has been. That was only—a way out. The community was sympathetic for a good many people knew—" He met her eye and merely said: "People felt Father had been good to Mother—so they gave him this way out. They never even brought it into court—what was behind it, I mean."

There was something more she ought to ask. If she was going to understand she ought to ask what it was they never brought into court, what it was made people kind to Father. Through that question the truth would lie—the whole truth. Why Mother had not loved her, why she had been kept away from home. Deep underneath the answer to that question lay the secret of unhappy glances, of troubled looks. Know this true answer and she would know the secret of this house.

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She sat there seeking voice to ask it. But as she looked at her brother she could not ask. He was bowed and his face so drawn. He looked as he would look when he was old. And even herself—how could she take in any more tonight when her mind still had to know that her father, who had been dead for years, was alive at this moment?

But she did say—though gently, she couldn't bear down on him now: "Warren, what do *you* think? After Father had kept me away for years, why did he then leave the house to me? Not to us together—to me alone. And in this—this urgent—this almost beseeching way. That I was to live in it, or it would be torn down. What was in his mind?"

He raised his head and looked at her, looked as if asking her to know something without his saying it. He said at last: "Perhaps he was still protecting Mother."

And by his voice she knew he could say no more that night, and she could ask no more.



Chapter X

"**A**ND the reason they came to this country," said Lydia, "was that they wanted to worship God in their own way."

They were out under the apple tree, sitting on a Mexican blanket, and she was trying to tell a little girl born in Greece and a boy born in Yucatan the story of their new country.

"It was very brave of them, for they did not know the country they were going to; it was many hundreds of miles across water they did not know, and they went in a small ship. The ship we came in, Koula, was more than ten times as big as theirs."

"We came in a big ship!" cried Koula proudly. "There were carpets on the stairs," she told Diego. "We had ice-cream all the time."

"Well, they didn't," said Lydia, "and they didn't know what they were going to have. It was a sailing ship—you know, Diego."

He nodded, gravely interested.

"So they were dependent on the winds, and the winds were strong and stormy. Nine weeks they were on the *Mayflower* and homes were not waiting for them when

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they reached land. They had to make homes in the wilderness. The Indians—people strange to them—were there—”

“And the Indians were bad to them!” cried Koula, who had been looking at pictures in the book.

“Some of them were friendly, but not all of them welcomed the newcomers. They did not like these strangers coming into their place—and I do not know that you can blame them—and so they fought with the people who had come to worship God in their own way.”

“There are some bad Indians,” Diego conceded.

“In Greece,” told Koula, with no little relish, “there was a man went around cutting off people’s heads. Like this,” she showed them.

“There are some bad people in every country,” agreed Lydia. “Everybody in America is not good.” It was a little hard to tell the whole truth in building up love of country. “The Indians were not fairly treated,” she said firmly.

“No,” said Diego.

She turned to a happier aspect of it. “The Pilgrims came here to make homes for their children. They wanted their children to have a better life than they had had.” (As I want you to have, she thought.)

“Next time we can talk about what they did when they got here. How they built their houses and what they had to eat. It was very hard that first winter. It was much

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colder than they were used to—it was bitter cold and many of them died. But they kept on. They were brave because they believed they were doing right—worshiping God in their own way and making a home for their children, for all who would come after them. That is why we have this great country, where we can be—" she hesitated an instant—"happy, and free, where we have a chance to be good and useful people. Many brave people have given their lives to give us this country," she said. "And now don't you want to go and get some milk and cookies?"

Diego was studying a picture. "We could build a house like their houses," he said, and later she saw him looking over the rubbish heap.

She sat on out there, her back against the tree trunk.

Two weeks had gone by since Warren told her. At first she felt she could not stay another day. She wouldn't have stayed had it not been for the little girl born in Greece and a boy who was half Indian. They liked it here. They were healthier—happier—all the time. This was home to them now. Tear that up when it was just beginning? Take them to another new place—wander with them? Leave them wondering why this was, as she had been left wondering about things never made clear to her? Those people she had just been talking about—the Pilgrims, they wanted their children to have a better life. Their ways were not her ways, but she wanted these

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children of hers to have a life in which they could live as their complete selves, not thwarted, baffled, not living with part of themselves and shying away from—they knew not what.

And herself too—if she ran away now, what would it leave her? Only that she would feel a fool for having come. Her reason for coming would have failed. She would go her way, not more surely—oh, much less surely than before. The past had not opened to bring her light. All she knew was that there was something darker than she had dreamed.

Even the thing that fortified her in coming was uncertain now. She came in confidence because she thought her father had wanted her to come. But Warren thought not, and so she questioned even this, and what had been her strength withdrew from her—to become part of all she did not understand. How could she leave—leaving it like that?

She was turning pages of the book she had for the children and a picture recalled what she had said to them—Very hard that first winter, but they thought they were right and so they did not give up. Perhaps no one else in the world would think she was right to stay on here and try to find the meaning of the years she had lived. What difference does it make, another would say. That is all in the past, and you have your own life to live. But there it was—she had her own life to live. She

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could live it if she knew who she was, what manner of person, and why she had seemed one to be cast aside. Too long she had needed to know to give up now and say, "It doesn't matter. I will just go ahead." Go ahead—from what? To what?

That would be relinquishing the faith in which she had lived—that there must be a reason for what had been, and if she understood it uncertainty and hurt would pass from her and she would be free. That was the best she had had to live by—that blind relief, the trust that said—if I really knew I would understand and accept. To give up now would be giving up the faith of her own years, faith that had often been her only friend and stay.

She was still stunned by what she had learned and could not even take in that her father was not dead. She knew there were things in what Warren said could tell her much more than he had put in words. Perhaps she had it all now, if only she knew how to use it. But she was still as if raw from what she had come to know. Almost as strong as wanting to know was fear of another hurt. And so she gave herself time, time for renewed strength.

It was all about Mother, and she knew so little about her mother. That she was beautiful—and always drew away from her. No, not always. She had an inkling now of something she had not known before, something her wounded heart had not told her. Her mother had not al-

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ways wanted to draw away from her. There had been times when she almost showed she loved her. But when she had gone a little way she would draw back, as if she were—what? Afraid?

There was the time she fell off the fence onto the stones. Her face was bleeding and she ran into the house crying. Her mother's arms went round her as a mother's would and she even cried, "Oh, my darling!" But almost at once she said, in her usual way of not being close, "I'll get some warm water."

Other things like that she remembered now. Had Mother felt she shouldn't love her? And why would that be?

She heard a car turn in and thought it was Mr. Swartz with a chair he had been repairing. But in a moment Addie came round the house and with her a woman—from town, apparently.

As she rose and went to meet them she saw it was Mrs. Burroughs—the woman at Ivy's that day who had been kinder than the others. That kind face.

"Perhaps you're not ready for visitors," her visitor smiled, "but I've been wanting to see you again."

"What must she think of me?" thought Lydia, remembering the day she had said, "After my father died—" Yet in spite of constraint she was glad to have so friendly a visitor. She always warmed to friendliness.

She suggested they go in. "But you were sitting out

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here, and it's so pleasant." Her guest sat down on the rug.

They chatted for a time about the house and Lydia tried not to keep thinking of what she had said at Ivy's.

This was the way it had always been. She liked people and wanted them to like her, wanted to be easy and friendly with them. And then she would come to a place where she could go no further. Something had built up and she did not know how to get past it. She would draw back when she wanted to go on.

And all of a sudden she determined, I'll not *be* like that! The Chippmans have kept silence too long. I'll break this down!

Before she could stop herself she said: "You must have thought I was very strange the other day."

"I knew you didn't understand," was the reply, simply and gently spoken.

"Warren thought I knew, but I didn't. I thought Father had died."

Mrs. Burroughs only nodded, her eyes warm and friendly, not as if she were disconcerted Lydia should be speaking out like this.

"Even yet I don't quite believe it is true. My mind had thought the other thing so long. Now it's as if my mind wouldn't let Father be alive."

"Naturally."

Naturally. What a lovely word.

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"Of course I'm glad." Or, am I? she thought.

"There was a warm feeling about your father," Mrs. Burroughs said after a little.

Lydia wanted to go further and ask, Why was that? And what is it all? But this she could not do, could not ask what it was about her mother.

"You and I have quite a bond, Lydia. I may call you Lydia, mayn't I? And Mary is my name."

"A bond, Mary?" cried Lydia, in happier voice.

"Your mother and mine were friends when they were girls."

"They *were*? Why—why, Mary!"

She had never known anyone who knew Mother when she was a girl. She knew nothing about her mother's early years. That had been just another silence. Mother wouldn't speak of when she was young, when she herself was little. When Lydia used to ask she was told to run along and play, or do her lessons. Once her father told her Mother's family had all died and she didn't want to talk about those days. She didn't even know where her mother had lived before she was married—where she grew up. And now—

"Tell me about it!"

"Mother wants to tell you herself. That's one reason I came out. Mother lives with me now and we want you to come in and have lunch with us."

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Lydia said she'd love to, but it was hard not to go on asking questions, know more then and there.

"But tell me this—"

Mary laughed as she said: "Mother likes to tell her own stories. Can you come Tuesday?"

Where had Mary's mother known her mother? So many things she could hardly wait to know.

After she had shown her new friend the house and she had met the children it was arranged Mary come out for her on Tuesday.

"I won't be helpless long," Lydia laughed, more happily than since she had talked that night with her brother. "I'll get a car and learn to drive it!"

Toward evening Warren and Ivy drove out with their children, John and Harriett. They were older than Koula and Diego and so far it had not been easy going between the children. John and Harriett tried not to stand and stare at the newcomers, but that was what they wanted to do. Koula was much impressed with them, but Diego seemed to be reserving judgment.

"Here!" cried Warren. "We'll play ball," and he started a game for them.

Later Lydia told them of her visitor and she thought Warren and Ivy seemed disturbed about her going in to see Mary's mother.

"Had you known she and Mother were friends, Warren?"

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"Why—maybe I did. I don't remember."

"Did you know, Ivy?"

"Seems to me I've heard Mary speak of it."

They had been very good to her since that day they found she had come back all in the dark about her father. Warren still showed the strain of that night he had to tell her.

When Ivy came out the day following that night she had cried out: "Oh, Lydia! It's just *cruel* to you—and after all you've done."

She had asked in a timid way unlike Ivy if Lydia would stay on now, and Lydia had truthfully replied: "I don't know."

"I wish you would—if you feel you can. I'm used to you here now," Ivy had said.

Today, when Warren again joined the children Ivy said: "I wouldn't talk too much with Mary's mother."

"But I want to talk with a woman who knew Mother when she was a girl."

"I don't see why. I mean—let the past go. It wasn't a very happy past. Why not forget it? John! Stop throwing at that donkey!"

But how could you forget it, thought Lydia.

After they drove away she kept thinking about them. They had no interest in Mary's mother having known Mother when she was a girl. That wasn't so strange of Ivy, but Warren couldn't even remember whether he

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had known it. What they wanted was to forget it all. Because they had been through so much, she supposed. "You were lucky not to have been here," they had said.

To her there was something deeply stirring in the thought of becoming a little more acquainted with her own mother.

Chapter XI

SOME days are happy days—of themselves, as if for their own sakes. They seem to be enjoying themselves, regardless of what use may be made of them.

The day Mary was to come for Lydia was thus pleased with itself. The elm tree knew it had dignity and grace. Tall grasses on the hill swayed to say—We are beautiful too. The cemetery up there seemed new cleansed this June day, shrubs planted for remembered people aware it was their own function to be alive. There had been a needed rain in the night and all that grew rejoiced. The birds were about their happy business.

Lydia felt like the day and put on a dress like it, her suit woven from the Greek silk and color of the corn-silk with which, when a little girl, she had made braids for her doll Alexandria. She had seen the women weaving this silk, at Sykia on the Peloponnesos, their arms moving rhythmically and jabbering together as they worked. She remembered Marie, the Frenchwoman in Constantinople who made the suit for her. Putting it on, knotting the scarf of apple-green at her throat, a number of days seemed to come together in this day and she was humming a snatch from one of the interminable songs about the life and death of a Mexican general.

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"And does she look smart!" cried Mary, as Lydia came out to the car.

She looked at her more intently and thought—She is beautiful. Or, is she? Thought—It's the bones, the structure. Cheek bones rather high, chin delicate and sensitive. So were her nostrils sensitive and the modeling about her eyes. She has distinction, Mary thought, watching Lydia saying good-by to the children; here is something rare. She is herself—not copied from somebody else. She moves as she feels, her body is right for her. The life of her mind is in her eyes—the wondering and hurts. Her smile is a quick response, bright and kind. She is vibrant and pure, Mary thought warmly of her new friend.

They started off gaily, chatting about the good rain, about gardens and houses and children. And underneath Lydia was thinking—I am going to become a little more acquainted with my mother; with some trepidation, yet buoyantly, for it seemed good must come under such happy auspices.

Mary's mother was a small dark woman, whose eyes darted here and there; she had quick movements, like a bird's. She welcomed Lydia warmly, in her quick, clipped voice. "My dear, we're glad you came home. You've been gadding around long enough. I wanted to see you. Your mother and I used to— What hair she had! And her eyes were as blue as the bluebells. Once I held one up to see if they really were that blue."

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"I want to hear all about it," said Lydia.

But at lunch Mrs. Nichols kept asking questions about herself. How did she get along in those outlandish countries? Were the people civilized? What did they eat? The women, she understood, were all fat. Had Lydia starved herself? Mary must watch her weight.

Mary's daughter had lunch with them. Elma was sixteen and she too wanted to know things. Did they dance much over there? Did they have movies? A most agreeable meal, but as they ate their lamb chops and green peas nothing was said about the friendship between this dark little old lady and Lydia's mother. That would come later, when they talked after lunch. She told them about riding a camel.

"You don't look at all like your mother," Mrs. Nichols said when they had moved out to the screened porch off the living-room.

"And I don't look at all like you, Mother," laughed Mary.

"Which is just as well," her mother replied.

"If I could have chosen," said Lydia, "I would have looked like Mother."

"You're all very well as you are, my dear. You have nothing to complain of. But your mother was the most beautiful girl I ever saw in my life."

Lydia only waited.

"I'll never forget the first day I saw her. She was com-

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ing through the little birch thicket and when she came out of the shadows the sun was on her hair. It—well, you've seen sun on corn-silk. And the sun on her skin. . . . You read a lot of nonsense about skin. Like cream, they say. What kind of skin would that be? Call it cream if you want to. I haven't words for what's perfect. Her cheeks were peach-bloom. I know *that*. It was her first day, we were all strange to her, and she held back a moment, there against the birches. And when she came toward us she made the rest of us look as though we weren't put together right."

"For which I should think you might have hated her," laughed Mary.

"No, you couldn't hate Hertha. She was too beautiful. You just had to take it. Her mouth was rather heavy, except it was so luscious. Mercy!—how I'm talking—and an old woman too. And when she smiled, she didn't very often, her teeth—"

"They were like the dental ads," supplied Mary.

"I never had good teeth myself. Maybe that's why I envied Hertha the teeth more than anything. 'Dental ads!'" she scoffed at Mary.

Lydia was pleased. But after all she knew how her mother looked. So many other things she wanted to know.

"And where did—" she began.

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But Mrs. Nichols did not interrupt her own memories.
"None of us ever knew her very well," she said.

Lydia supposed that was because Mother went away, or Mrs. Nichols had gone away, but Mary asked: "Why was that, Mother, when you went to school together?"

So they had gone to school together!

"I don't know why it was. She was—to herself."

"Yes," murmured Lydia.

"I used to often wonder what she was thinking about."

"Yes," Lydia assented again.

"Once I asked her. She drew away, though she hadn't moved. I don't think she ever liked me as well again."

"Oh, Mother, come now!" protested Mary, but Lydia's mind did not protest.

"You used to talk about going back and forth to each other's houses," Mary prompted, as her mother was dwelling with her own thoughts. "Tell about the time you two went way up in the barn and couldn't get back because the ladder fell down."

"Oh—that," was all her mother said.

Lydia asked, as easily as she could: "Where was this school?"

"Why, it was the Walnut Hill school. I used to live in the country too."

And now the pleasant day was changing—that fear of something she should know and didn't know at all. There was a Walnut Hill school here, right out there at

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home. She had gone to it herself. Had Mother been visiting here then, and gone to school a little while? Had Mother, as a little girl, gone to the school *she* went to? But how could that be and she not know it? It must be another Walnut Hill.

It could again be as so many times before—afraid of all she did not know, living by herself in the dark. She *would*. She would ask!

“And where did you live when you were a girl?” she asked, quite brightly.

Mrs. Nichols came from her reverie and looked at Lydia in surprise. “Why, I always lived here,” she said. “Your mother and I lived not half a mile apart.”

“You mean *Mother* lived here?” It tore from Lydia before she knew she was going to say it.

“Why, yes. But my *child*, surely you knew *that*.”

“No, I didn’t know it,” said Lydia, her head up proudly, telling herself she didn’t care—if even that she hadn’t known—a natural thing like that—what was the use of pretending any longer?

“Well that’s *very* funny,” said Mrs. Nichols. “But then the Chippmans always were funny.”

“Mother,” murmured her daughter.

“Your mother’s right,” said Lydia. “The Chippmans always were funny! But I didn’t know,” she laughed—and held the laugh till she could go on speaking—“didn’t know they were *that* funny.”

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"Oh, this is too *bad*," said Mary.

"No, it isn't," Lydia said. "I'm sick of not knowing things! I wish you'd tell me—all you can. You'd be—very kind, if you would."

"I don't know very much to tell," Mrs. Nichols said, as if she should be careful now.

"Where did Mother live—all this time you knew her?"

Mrs. Nichols seemed not to want to answer. She was fidgeting in her chair. "Why—why, she lived with the Chippmans," she said at last.

"The Chippmans." Lydia said it as if to see what else it could mean. "You mean," she asked slowly, "that my mother grew up in the house where I grew up?"

"Well—yes. After she came here that was where she lived."

"Came here?"

"She was about eleven then."

"And where did she come from?" Lydia pursued, though the old lady who had seemed so young for her years had sunk back in her chair and Mary moved her own chair nearer anxiously.

"I'm sorry," said Lydia, "to persist like this, but you can see I don't know. I don't know why I don't know and I'm tired of it! Would you tell me, please, who was Mother, and where did she come from?"

"My dear," said the older woman, "I don't know who

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she was or where she came from. All at once she was there. That was all we ever knew."

"Perhaps you'd better go up and lie down, Mother," Mary suggested with some concern.

"I'm sorry," said Lydia again. "I fear I've tired you. I hadn't meant to. You can see— But would you tell me one thing more? You say: All at once she was there. But how did they explain it? What did they say about it—the Chippmans?"

"The Chippmans are pretty good at keeping still, when they want to. You ought to know that."

"Yes," said Lydia.

"And Mother herself?" she asked. "Didn't *she* ever—"

Hertha's old friend shook her head. "Hertha never told who she was or where she came from. There was something about her kept you from asking questions. Those who did ask—got silence for their pains."

"I know," said Lydia.

Mrs. Nichols went upstairs. She seemed almost feeble as she rose from her chair and Mary went with her. But she had a warm good-by for Lydia. "You'll come again. Come often. Mary has taken a great fancy to you, and so have I."

She started to go and then turned back and kissed Lydia's cheek. "That's for your mother, and never mind who she was or where she came from. She was so beautiful. That's enough. And don't fret about the Chipp-

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mans. They were always queer. You're the best of the lot."

Lydia stood looking down to the gently sloping lawn—gay garden and oak tree that spread so graciously. Just this morning all things that grew had looked so beautiful—partaking and giving of life.

She wished she could go home alone. But Mary wouldn't want her to do that. She might say she was going to Warren's. But she didn't want to go to Warren's just then.

She couldn't do it; she couldn't have friends here. Something she hadn't known was always coming up to make her strange, keep her from being one with them.

She was afraid she was going to cry. She hadn't cried about her father, though she had suffered and been almost struck down. This hurt more, another kind of hurt. For why wouldn't they want her to know Mother had grown up in the house where she grew up? Such a natural, intimate thing to know. How could it be withheld, concealed, and why should it be? Why had Mother never said, "When I was little here—" Why had she never said, "I used to do that too," as Lydia was always saying to Koula and Diego, and it was always a bond.

A bond. There was not to be a bond.

Mother and Father grew up together in that house. And Father had never said: "Remember, Hertha, how

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we used to—" They had shut her out from all those little things of home.

You felt lost in the world—not knowing who your mother was or where she came from. No, it wasn't that made you lost. It was her not wanting you to know.

Mary said: "How about a little drink? A glass of sherry."

But Lydia said she would have to go. She murmured something about how it would do her good to walk out home but Mary said nonsense to that.

"Let's go a little roundabout," said Mary in the car. "The day's lovely and you don't want to get home right now."

She did want to get home, she wanted to hide—what must they *think* of her!—but she couldn't protest.

In a woods beyond the town Mary stopped the car.

"Lydia darling," she said, "I know everything there is to know about my family. Perhaps you'll feel offended if I say I rather envy you."

"I don't feel offended," said Lydia, "but—forgive me, I think you don't know what you're talking about."

"All about Mother and all about Father. It's all right, but none of it's very—stimulating. To me your mother seems the most romantic figure I ever knew about. Think of having such a mother! Why, you can build anything around her—and there's no fact to stop you."

"No fact to tie to."

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"Who wants to tie? We're all too tied by what we know. When you don't know you can imagine. Once upon a time there was a beautiful young princess," Mary began, fairy-tale fashion. "And as she walked through the birch trees to children who— Or maybe she was a goddess. She must have looked like one. Mother doesn't usually rave on like that. Maybe she came from somewhere beyond our world, where there is beauty such as we have never beheld. *Play* with the idea, Lydia."

"I wish I could—play with it," Lydia tried to laugh. "But it's all too queer to play with."

"It's damn queer," said Mary. "I rather like that about it."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't like it. If suddenly you found your mother grew up in the house where you grew up, and everything about it had been withheld from you, if there was never a doll she had played with—no story about the dog—it would make you think there was something queer about *you*."

"Pooh," said Mary; "there's nothing queer about you. It's the rest of them. You heard Mother. The Chippmans were always queer. Even Warren—a little. But not you. You're the most natural person I ever knew. Think of taking those children—and the donkey—just because you wanted to."

"Perhaps that was queer."

"Now stop it! Or you'll *get* queer—and I won't have

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it. You're my dear new friend—and you're not to get notions."

Lydia sat there thinking. "There's a reason for it all," she said at last.

"Of course there is."

"And I want to know the reason. Then I can be your friend. Then I can be—not queer. That's why I came home. But there's—more and more. Instead of understanding, I go deeper into what I can't understand."

"That's a bluebird," said Mary, pointing.

"Mother didn't tell you half as much as I meant her to," Mary went on, after they had watched the bird fly with easy grace to the top of a tall tree. "We got switched off. She had such a feeling about your mother. She was intrigued. I think she felt something in that beauty and that silence. I suppose she wondered—in her young way—what was back of it."

"As I wonder," murmured Lydia.

"Something was back of it. Perhaps something very hard. Perhaps something too hard happened to your mother when she was very young, and she couldn't speak of it. If you don't speak at first, then you can't speak."

"I know that," said Lydia.

"Mother didn't love me," she said, after a moment. "I don't know that I was a lovable child, but it seems so natural to love your child—lovable or not."

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"Perhaps she loved you," said Mary gently, "but couldn't show she did. Perhaps it was all just part of what we don't understand."

Lydia was more grateful to her for this than for anything she had said.

"Now will you remember," said Mary, when they had reached home, "that the birds are singing and the flowers are blooming? That the past is in the past and in this moment you have a new friend who loves you?"

Lydia put her hand on Mary's. Mary said: "I hate to leave you here alone.

"See you soon!" she called back as she drove away.
"We'll take the kids on a picnic!"

Chapter XII

HE went in the house as stiff as one who has long been sitting in a cramped position. Mary was like sunshine, but this was a stiffness sunshine could not reach. To the marrow of her being it had penetrated till her spirit was rigid and she was outside the good fluid world in which one rejects and accepts—adjusts, assimilates, and is constantly renewed in life.

Yes, Mary was good, and there had been a moment of good-by in the car when she could partake of that warmth; but when she went inside the house itself seemed rigid and the past was frozen country behind her—or was it that she was frozen into that past she did not know and now would never know?

For she could not go on trying to know. She was defeated. Her bright banner was down. It was in good faith she had sought the light, for to know would be to understand—understand, not alone the life of one house, but life itself, the human heart by which we live. In our untried strength we cry: “Darkness, I challenge you! Let there be light!” Had she thought she could wave a magic wand and—lo! there would be light? O bright folly and vain endeavor—life does not give up its secrets.

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Leering powers seemed saying to her—This is what you get when you try to know. The wise let well-enough alone—and who are *you* to know what is not given you to know?

We challenge life for its meaning—and we haven't the courage for what hurts our feelings. We resent—and then we are shut out from understanding. Resentment opens no door and breeds no courage.

We are not big enough to take it; we go a little way—then falter, weep. Perhaps that was why man invented a hereafter—not brave and good enough to understand here.

She was hurt and angry too, and said things not at all herself. "What the hell do I care?" she said—as if even herself were hers no longer.

They didn't want her to know anything about them! Nothing was to be shared with her. Outside. She was outside. Very well—they could *keep* their secrets! Let the house be torn down and no man ever know its story! Dark—dark story. She'd go away.

Where? Some place that would be good for the children—that one thing she had to cling to.

She heard their voices now as they came running to the house. They burst in in great excitement.

"It's ready!"—Diego threw up his hands and waved them above his head. She had never seen him so exuberant.

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Koula's cheeks were blazing. "It's got a little roof that goes up like this!"—her hands made a peak. "It's got a door he can go in himself! It's got a *window!*" she squealed, dancing up and down.

"It's lined," said Diego. "He can't get wet."

Lydia had weakly sat down. Koula came and leaned on her lap. "And on it—what do you think is painted *on it?*?"

"Happy Home! Happy Home is painted on it—in *red*."

"Happy home," she repeated—the first words she had spoken aloud since entering the house.

"And now we'll go and get him," cried Diego. "We'll see how it fits!"

"We'll see how he likes it," said Koula, again dancing around.

"I thought maybe 'Hans' should be painted on it," said Diego, "but Mr. Joe thought 'Happy Home,' and Koula liked that best."

"Yes!" cried Koula. "Happy Home!"

"We'll start now?" asked Diego, eyeing her a little anxiously. Diego always knew when things weren't right with her.

The puppy Henry was giving the children. Henry had said he was old enough to take now and she had promised they would go for him when she got back. Addie's Joe had made a kennel for him. They had named him

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Hans for Hans Christian Andersen. She had been reading them the fairy-stories.

A puppy and Hans Christian Andersen in *this* house. Puppy and fairy-stories in a house that shut you out! No. They couldn't take the puppy now. They were going away.

She tried to put it off. "Do you think," she asked, "it might be better to wait till morning?"

"No!"

"He might be getting sleepy now. It's always best to move in the morning."

"We went over again this afternoon," said Diego; "he's all ready to come."

"We went over to see him!" cried Koula. "We visited him and his mother and his brothers and sisters. He isn't sleepy. He's *playing*."

"Mr. Henry said it would be all right to come when you got back," said Diego—oh, so anxiously.

"And see?" Koula ran to the kitchen and came back with a little blanket. "This is for him to sleep on my bed!"

Lydia almost smiled. "I thought he was to sleep in his own house." (She had well known the puppy would not sleep in his own house.)

"Not *nights*," said Koula, shocked. "Nights? *Alone*—in the dark?"

"No," said Lydia. "Not nights. Alone. In the dark."

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Maybe she could do low mean things. She felt now perhaps she could. But one thing she could not do—not so long as the breath of life was in her! She could not disappoint children about a puppy.

She rose. "We're off," she said.

They went racing ahead of her—whooping and throwing themselves about, then scampering back to get her to hurry. They made exuberant detours—like puppies. As they went through the cemetery, "They'll rouse the very dead," thought Lydia, "and I don't care if they do. Wake up, dead! Wake up and take a puppy!"

"He's pick of the litter," said Henry.

"Pick of the litter!" cried Koula, as happy as if she knew what it meant.

Diego was holding the black-and-white shepherd pup. "Let me!" cried Koula.

"Don't fight over him," laughed Henry.

"You can hold him now," Koula offered generously.

So the pup was on Lydia's lap, licking her face, squirming all over her. "He's lively," she said.

"You bet he's lively," said Henry. "You'll find that out. He'll tear the old place to pieces."

"That will be all right with me," said Lydia, but Hans was again licking her face. How can words have a bitter thought underneath when a puppy is licking your face?

"He *likes* you!" cried Koula.

"Of course," said Diego.

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"Who doesn't?" laughed Henry.

A frozen past seemed letting her go—a little. She held Hans up to note his markings. "He's in evening clothes," she said.

The children wanted to know what she meant and when she explained about the black suit and white front they were all laughing and said they would have a party for Hans.

Henry started out with them. The three happy little animals ran on ahead. Three happy little animals going home to the Chippman place. You get caught into things, she thought. What can you do? It isn't what you want to do, it's what life wants to do.

"Where are your folks buried, Henry?" she asked, as he walked through the cemetery with her. "Or don't you care?" she laughed.

"Oh, I care—enough. They're over yonder. I keep pretty busy. I've got cows as well as the dead, you know. But I think of them. They were good folks."

"I know."

"I think about Father when I'm working. Guess he'd rather I thought about him when I'm working than by his grave. He liked the cows—rubbing down the horses and getting in the grain. And I think about Mother more in the house. She was awful busy but she always had her flower-bed. Mother was a good cook. The har-

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vest-hands always liked to come to our place. Most women complain about harvest-hands.

Hans had gotten under the fence of a grave and Henry went to help the children extricate him. Lydia waited. That was a nice homely little tribute Henry had paid his parents. So easy-going and real. She thought they would probably be pleased.

She turned and faced the other way, where there was a grave to which a woman had carried secrets. "Why couldn't you ever tell, Mother? Wouldn't it have been better to have told? Why were you—to yourself, as your old friend said. You're to yourself now. Need you have been that way in life?"

Twilight was dimming the day. Another night for the living and the dead. What was it Koula had said about Hans? "At *night*? Alone? In the dark?"

"Oh—*Mother*," breathed Lydia, compassionate.

"These people who are here now," she said, continuing her thoughts after Henry joined her, "they were once like that,"—motioning to the children ahead. "Racing and screaming and playing with a puppy. Then they grew up—most of them, and there were things that were very important. I was just wondering—how many of the things that were important then would they think important now? If they could tell us it might be—helpful," she laughed.

"I suppose many of them went through something all

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alone," she said, as Henry did not speak. "And that made them alone then as they are now. I wonder—"

"Wonder about something happier, Lydia," he said.

"That isn't unhappy to me. It makes me feel rather close to them—to think there is something they might like to tell me, if they could. One of them might like to say, 'I fretted all my last years because we couldn't paint the house. And I might have thought about so many other things—while I still had a chance to think. That last year I hardly saw the buds on the trees—because we couldn't paint the house. Now I don't care much whether 'twas painted or not. I'd like to see the buds swell again.' Someone right there"—she pointed down—"might say, 'I never *smelled* enough. I'd like to smell the clover again, and leaves that are burning.' And this one over here might say, 'I wish instead of getting breakfast first thing I'd sometimes walked bare-foot in the dew.' Things like that maybe we'd wish we'd done."

"Well—" Henry began, but didn't go on.

"I wonder what my grandmother and grandfather were like," she said after they had walked a little way in silence.

"I expect they were all right," said Henry. "Most of those old-timers were."

"I never knew them. They died before I was born. I never even heard much about them. We didn't talk much at our house. Did your folks talk, Henry?"

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"Mother was quite a talker," he laughed.

Lydia walked on alone, thinking about these grandparents. They were there too—behind it. They had taken Mother when she was about eleven. How did they happen to do that—and how did *they* get on with her? Did they know where she came from? They must have. A child couldn't just appear out of the blue, in spite of Mary, who played with the idea Mother might have come from another world.

Hans dominated the early evening. There was little place for grandparents in her thoughts. Even the other Hans—Christian Andersen—did not receive his usual attention.

But at last three happy little animals were asleep—sleep that would restore for another day's play. There had been nothing to do about Hans sleeping on Koula's bed—at least nothing that *she* could do, because she hadn't been permitted the puppy on her bed—remembered that, and wanted Koula to remember the fewest possible things her little heart had longed for and not had. Diego would have liked Hans on his bed but she got around that by saying Koula was a little girl and he quite a big boy and Koula felt Hans would protect her. They had laughed together about that little wiggle-ball protecting Koula. A happy going to bed.

As she went downstairs she was thinking that she and her grandparents had something in common. They had

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both taken children not born to them. Did that seem strange to you, she thought, or did it seem natural enough? It wasn't anything *you* did, was it, made her "to herself"? She kept remembering that phrase of Mary's mother, for it seemed to say it. "You didn't make her feel she was different, did you, and what had been hard in the past you tried to make her forget, didn't you?"

Koula had been a child too many in her first home and Diego a little boy others didn't want to play with, but they were happy children now. It could be done. Was there something in Mother made it different and harder to do?

She got out the old album and found the pictures of that man and woman who had taken into their home a girl named Hertha. They looked as if a child would be all right with them. One might not say they had a friendly look, but people didn't look too friendly in those old pictures. They seemed conscious of being dressed in their Sunday best and having their pictures taken. Her grandfather looked as if he might have been a rather silent man; those pressed lips didn't suggest opening for much unnecessary talk. Yet the eyes seemed eyes of a just man. Grandmother had lace round her throat and fashioned down the front of her dress. Perhaps it was that made her face look softer than her husband's, as if she would be the one a child would turn to. You would call them good people, she supposed, and

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much more about them she could not tell. The pictures were faded, dimming the virtues they may have had.

They had had three children of their own, and the first two died. More children were lost in those years than now. Father was the only one who grew up. Here was a picture of a little boy—Father's brother. He was grinning, as if it amused him to have his picture taken. He had died of diphtheria soon after that grin, for he died at five. And the little girl they lost in infancy. So much her father had told her when once she asked him about his brothers and sisters.

Were they thinking of the little girl they lost when some years later they took another girl into their home? It wasn't so usual to adopt children then.

Here was a picture of Father when he must have been around thirteen, and next that a place where a picture had been taken out. Another of Father as a young man, and again a picture had been removed—the edging torn, as if it were done hastily. In those places, she surmised, had been pictures of her mother, and she also suspected Mother herself had withdrawn her pictures. There was no picture of her mother in the album.

There was the one she had found among her father's things, had one day shown to Ivy—and Ivy had not been interested. That was the picture of a young woman, possibly taken not long after she had married. It had been underneath some of Father's papers—hidden, perhaps to

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save it from being destroyed in a moment one might want to destroy one's picture. For what reason would one destroy one's picture? If homely—yes, but Mother was beautiful.

Strange how Mother and Father grew up together in this house and then married. Boy and girl who grew up together—well, it was hardly the romantic setting. They knew too much about each other; they squabbled. Certainly she and Warren had squabbled, and already Diego and Koula did—a little; she had rather welcomed it, it made them seem like brother and sister. She should think her mother and father would have felt more like brother and sister.

She closed the album wearily. It was just another closed door. Even the album had its secrets, and held them. There was no one could tell her.

Yes, there was one who could tell her. Her father could.

She sat there a long time, the old album on her lap.

Ever since she had known her father still lived, or since she had recovered enough to begin to know it, she had wondered if she would ever see him. More than ever tonight, now that she knew this much about Mother, she wanted to see him. Why shouldn't she?

She had asked Warren when he had last seen him. It was about six months, he thought.

"But, Warren," she said then, "is that kind? He must

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feel so alone there—amongst strangers, and yet his home so near." It had seemed all wrong to her, when Warren could drive there so easily.

But Warren replied: "Yes, it is kind. It's as if he has left this life—all except Mother. It only troubles him when I come. Don't get anything into your head, Lydia—about going there. It would be hard for Father and hard for you. No good would come of it."

She opened the album again and looked at the picture of her father when he was about thirteen. A fresh boyish face. An open countenance. Knowing nothing of what was to come, of how the years would change those frank eyes and make a silent man, who loved greatly and bore a hard burden alone. He had not been meant to be as he became.

It seemed too cruel, now that he had played his bitter loyal part, and while he still lived, there could not be some easement.

Chapter XIII

IT was Koula who opened the way back into Mother's girlhood. Koula produced the first thing from those years that you could hold in your hands, look upon and say: "Yes, she had this; this is left from the years she was young in this house."

Lydia and Diego were outdoors taking worms off the tomato plants. Not an attractive job, but just now she was grateful for things that had to be done outdoors—a reason for not staying in the house. The children had crashed through—that day she left Mary, came inside and been caught into a frozen past. They'd broken through to her and warmed her—whether she liked it or not. Resentment wasn't so bitter—so hateful—after Hans licked her face; her heart melted when—night not far away—she stood on the hilltop of the dead and across other graves faced the place her mother lay alone. "Nights? *Alone*—in the dark?" But the house still hurt, for she had been excluded from the life of that house. Hurt because she had never been told little things that would have made her a happy part of it all, like—"Your little chair was once my chair." "We like to feel we belong," she would think. "We *need* that. It's lonely if we

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can't feel we belong." So she stayed outside a good deal these days.

Now she was about to deposit a loathsome green creature into a can of kerosene when Koula burst out, slamming the screen door.

"Look what I found!" she cried, and promptly put what she had found behind her and stood there, her head a little lowered, smiling, as if asking something.

"That one's done for," said Lydia. "What did you find, Koula?"

"It will make a coat for Jenifer."

Aunt Jenifer's namesake was a doll with flaxen hair.

"It has flowers all over it! Red and blue. Like those." She pointed to the morning-glories climbing the back of the house.

"It has? Let's see it."

Koula held out what appeared to be a dresser-scarf that had been worked in cross-stitch. "I never saw it," said Lydia. "Where did you find it?"

"Oh, I found it," said Koula, as if that were achievement enough—and very much as if covering something she shouldn't have done. "Will we make the coat today?"

"Let me have it." Lydia put down the two sticks with which she had been getting worms, rubbed her hands on her denim slacks and took the piece of worked cloth. And in an instant she breathed, "Oh."

Her hands narrowed to one place in a lower corner.

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She was peering at that place. "Where did you find this?" she asked, in little more than a whisper.

Diego got up, as if feeling something was wrong. He stood over her.

"Answer me! No matter where you found it, you must tell me!"

"You must tell," Diego said.

Koula began to cry. "I was just looking—she has to have a coat! Everybody has a coat."

"Yes, Koula. She will have a coat. But where did you find this?"

Koula rubbed her eyes, trying to make more tears come. "It was in that place. That closet outside my room. It was in the big black box. She has to have a coat!"

"You mean you rummaged in that trunk?"

"I just put my hand down,"—showing how easy it had been to do, "and it was there."

A trunk she hadn't gone through. One of the things waiting to be done. On top was wall-paper that hadn't been used, some pieces of oil-cloth—odds and ends that seemed mere rubbish.

Lydia rose, held the old scarf at its length. Some of the stitches suggested it was worked by one who hadn't done that kind of work before, young or inept fingers. And in the lower left-hand corner was embroidered "Hertha."

"Will we make the coat?" Koula asked timidly.

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"We'll make a coat, but not of this. This wasn't meant to be cut up. It was made a long time ago. I think it was made by my mother." She put her hand on Koula's shoulder. "Something else. Maybe the red satin."

"The red satin?" cried Koula, more than consoled.

Lydia nodded and went in the house.

Underneath discarded things in that broken-down old trunk . . . And this seemed so personal. What else might be there—concealed under the unimportant?

Mother had kept this all the years. A first piece of work, something she treasured. The minutes of her making them were caught into the stitches. A girl sitting by a window—sitting by a lamp—sending a needle, now down, now up, fair head bent, eyes intent—so long ago. And now it was here, after eyes had closed and hands did not work back and forth. The girl who became her mother—somehow this made her so real.

The mistakes made her real. There was one flower did not join its stem. In making "Hertha" you could see the letter *r* had been pulled out and done again. Something so living about mistakes.

And she had never, when Lydia was that age, got this out and said, "See? I did this when I was twelve. Oh, it took me a long time. See where I went wrong? I had never done one before. I always liked the morning-glories. [Lydia remembered now this was true.] And

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when I got through I worked my name, to say I had done it all myself."

No, she had not said anything like that. This work of her young hands had been hidden away. What could the past possibly hold that was reason enough for all this hiding away?

She remembered the busy day she had looked into that trunk and thought: This can wait. It had seemed the least important chest of all. Had it been meant to seem that? Things of no value are good covering for what one doesn't want found. She believed now there were other things there, and she wondered if she had the courage to lift out what didn't matter and find what might be buried underneath. Wondered whether she should, for when concealment was wanted should it not be respected?

Whatever future days might disclose that day was given over to the crimson coat for Jenifer. The following day there was a Sunday-school picnic and Koula had set her heart on Jenifer attending this picnic, in a satin coat. She couldn't go without her coat, Koula said—the impropriety of this not to be thought of. So Lydia made the coat, edged it with embroidery thread and got Koula to take a few stitches herself, so she would be part of the coat. "When you are grown up and have a little girl of your own," she said, "maybe you will tell her you helped make this coat."

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"Yes!" cried Koula.

The children were going to the picnic with Addie's family. The grove was not far away and even Pancho was going. Five cents would be charged to ride Pancho around the picnic-grounds and this would go for the new hymn books. Diego had the proud post of looking out for Pancho.

Lydia told Addie she would stay home. Sometimes a person did want a day to herself, Addie agreed. She would look after the children.

So Lydia had this day to herself. She did not say to herself how she was going to spend it. She didn't know.

She began her day by a lesson in housebreaking Hans. His feelings seemed hurt by the lesson, so she had to throw sticks for him. When he was tired he curled up on his rug in "Happy Home."

Then she set determinedly to weeding her seedlings. Later there would be gay marigolds and asters. Now they needed tending.

But all at once she threw her trowel aside and went in the house. Up the stairs she went and to that closet where waited an old trunk. The Chippmans had been queer enough, without her adding her mite. She would not put off what she knew she was going to do.

She lifted out the rolls of wall-paper and a torn rag rug. Below were old school-books—not hers and War-

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ren's, older than that; books thumbed by use and yellowed with age.

In a reader, in round girlish hand was written: "Hertha Chippman."

So Mother had used the family name. And then she wondered—was it perhaps her own name? Was she a relative—a distant cousin—who had come to live with them? But of course not. What would there be about that to make a family keep silent. They would have said to the neighbors, at the school: "John's cousin Hertha has come to live with us." No, she felt sure her mother had not been born Chippman, and what *was* the name not written here?

She turned the musty pages. Picture of an old mill. Picture of a spreading tree and of a barking dog. A poem—"What is so rare as a day in June?" Had they been rare—had they seemed beautiful—the days?

Geographies and arithmetics. Some inscribed Hertha and some John Chippman. In the room downstairs—the dining-room—they had studied together over these books. But never said to her, when at that same table she bent over her books—But never mind. Not too much thinking now.

Below were blocks for a quilt that had not been put together. Red and white the quilt was to have been. Never finished. Why not?

And then some clothes. She was trembling and

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couldn't stay cooped in the closet any longer. She pulled the trunk out into the hall, stood straight and then bent back, moving her shoulders to relax them.

She held up a blue seersucker dress, the skirt made in two ruffles and trimmed with braid of deeper blue. Mother must have looked nice in this dress—been proud of it. She took out other things: a net fichu; some crocheted lace, such as they used to put on underwear. The crochet hook was still here, and the thread. There was a long full white petticoat, trimmed with this lace, and a nightgown—long full sleeves. Some hair ribbons—mostly blue. Yes, that was right—blue, like her eyes.

Then some little boxes and things tied in papers. In one box a string of blue beads. In another, wrapped in tissue-paper, was a gold chain, and on it hung a delicate gold cross. Carefully put away—something treasured. Lydia held it in her hand, with sensitive fingers followed the shape of the cross. What had it meant to Mother? "I wish you had shown it to me," she thought wistfully. "I would have been so—interested."

There was a forget-me-not ring, and this little silver ring was broken. A brooch—other little things a girl would like. "Mother's jewels," she thought, and it was hard not to cry as she put back the broken ring.

In another box were two dainty handkerchiefs, kept for best. Did you go to parties, Lydia thought. Oh, you

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must have gone to *some* parties. Yes, here were slippers, yellowed now.

Valentines and frosted Christmas cards.

She pushed back her hair with dirty hands and knelt there looking down at the treasures of one girl's past. It seemed so little—but perhaps it had meant so much. They were both eloquent and mute. Why these things rather than other things? Some bright and happy moment—some shining hour? All of this had once meant life. She hoped it had meant happiness.

Only a few things remained. There was a scrap-book in which were pasted pictures cut from papers and magazines. New York harbor. A woman in a velvet dress and furs. (Did you want a velvet dress and furs?) The Rockies. The Grand Canyon. (Did you want to travel—you who lived most all your life in this house?) Horses racing. Girls dancing. Flowers at a carnival. Gay things. Things not had.

And this seemed to be the end. The bottom of the trunk was covered with heavy brown paper. She was smoothing it to put back the things she had taken out when her hand felt an uneven place in the corner and she knew there was something underneath.

She lifted the paper. She saw a very small package, wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. Her hands were unsteady as she took it out, for she knew—*knew*—this meant more than any other thing she had found.

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She had to sit down and went to a chair by the window in the hall. A long time she just sat there.

She tried to untie the string but it was too tightly knotted. She hesitated—then broke it.

But there was an inner wrapping. Now it was a thin package wrapped in white tissue-paper and tied with blue baby-ribbon. This one was easier to untie—and harder.

Outside Hans was barking. Mechanically she thought, "He wants to come in now. It's time for his food."

She went down and let him in. He jumped on her and she held—whatever it was she held—tight in one hand, and high. He thought he was to jump for it. "No, no!" she said.

She got his cereal and milk, and while he lapped noisily she went in and sat at the dining-room table and put down before her the thin carefully tied sheaf.

Could she untie this narrow ribbon? Should she? Perhaps now she had come to it. Perhaps now she would know. Could she? Should she?

Hans came in and nosed her knee. He was saying, "Where have they gone?" She murmured, "They'll come back." She put her hand on his head. It was good to feel the life there. In a minute he found his bone and was content.

Slowly she untied the ribbon. Yes, they were papers.

She unfolded the first sheet and tenderly smoothed it flat.

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It was her mother's writing; in pencil, and blurred.

"My Dear Brother," she read.

Her brother? Did she mean Father? Had he once seemed—? But she read on.

"My Dear Brother: Now it seems I am not going to see you again, am not going to find you. I tried so hard to find you. That was why I kept running away. But I did not know where to look for you. I did not know where they had taken you. Did you know where I was? No, you would have come for me if you had known where I was.

"Why did they have to separate us like that? If they had left us together we would have been all right. Mama and Papa would not have wanted us to be separated. You know they wouldn't.

"When I think of that night—how they didn't come back—and then when they told us—when the others told us—how could they have parted us after that? I mean when we had gone through it together, and nobody else knew how we felt—then why couldn't they have left us together—so neither one of us would have to know it alone?

"I can't talk about it to anyone else. I don't think I ever can. Just a little—to John. He says he is my brother now. He is good to me. They are good to me—here where I am now. They say I am to stay here with them. But where are *you*? My own brother—where are *you*?"

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I don't know as I can go looking for you any more. I don't know how. The world is so *big*. I am far away from where we were last together. I wouldn't know where to start. But I am always looking. I look out the window. Not many people come, it is in the country. But if I see someone coming around the hill, or coming to the school—I think maybe it is you. But it isn't. It is someone else. It is never you."

That was all there was on this page, and Lydia just sat there looking at it. She had read no further when she heard children's voices, and Hans went bounding to the door.

Chapter XIV

AT last the children were asleep. Pancho had made two dollars and thirty-five cents for the new hymn books. "And he can't even sing," said Koula. "They like him," Diego told her proudly. "They patted him and wanted to give him lots to eat, but I wouldn't let them give him too much."

"Now they all want to come here and ride him," said Koula. "But we won't let them, except the ones we like."

Diego and another boy—Freddie Jenks—were thinking of going in business. They could take Pancho into town and children would ride him for five cents—maybe ten. "And then we could buy a bicycle."

Koula had picnicked all too much—potato salad, cake and lemonade, and nature protested about the Sunday-school picnic. But the upset quieted down and now she slept sweetly, her cheek on her chubby hand, Hans at the foot and Jenifer in her own little bed close by, still wearing the red satin coat, "because she likes it."

What did they care about yellowed papers written by a bewildered girl who once lived in this house? And why should they care? The moment—only the happy moment for them. And what did they care about inter-

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rupting what engaged her mind and heart? As their mother she existed to make the days for them—and they did not even ponder this being true. For Hans the whole house was now a large and luxurious kennel, and for the children it was home, where they were secured against hurts and where tomorrow was just another happy day. "Right," said Lydia.

But this house had not always been security against hurt. There was a girl—Hertha—who could not easily come into security and move happily in a new life. The hurt had been too deep and she was too stubbornly loyal to let go.

Always she was wondering about her brother. She would look from the window and think he might be coming—and that look had never gone from her eyes.

How could a child go around looking for her brother? She had run away, she said. Then would they bring her back, and would they punish her—for seeking her brother? How could they be that cruel? Perhaps they didn't think of it as cruel; they just thought she ought to forget. You can't forget by being told to forget. Loyal, loving little girl, who became not loving because something had been done to her. How could one blame anyone for anything? If you didn't know you shouldn't blame.

What happened to the mother and father—to Mama and Papa? Was that told in what she hadn't read? The

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way to know was to read on. But this was so much—she couldn't hastily pass it by for more. She needed to dwell with it, as if within herself the truth waited, as well as on the papers of another day.

But later, in the silent house, she took the fragile sheaf from the drawer of her desk.

"It is almost a year since I wrote you first," she read on the second page, "but still I think that you are coming. Maybe it is foolish to write to you when I do not know where to send what I write. I have no idea what place in the world to send it to, and the world is so big. I study geography now. I do not even know what your name is now, for maybe yours is changed too. I did not want mine changed, for then you would not know how to find me, but they said this was better. They wanted my name to be Chippman and they are good to me. It was John who found me. I was up by the cemetery and it was beginning to rain. I was tired. I had walked a long way that day. Lots of times people would give me rides. I wouldn't tell them I was looking for my brother. I would say I was going to my aunts and had lost my money. They would put me down at a place and I would say my aunt lived over there. Then I would wait where people couldn't see me, and then walk on, and maybe get another ride. Once I rode on the train, a long way. I said I couldn't find my money, and a man paid for me. There was one man was *bad* to me. He said I was to be

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his little girl, but he was a bad man. But it would just make you feel bad to know about that.

"I don't know how I got as far as I did—this last time; other times I only got a little way, then someone would know I lived at the Lawsons and bring me back, and then they would whip me because I ran away. I didn't care—not much, I knew I would get away again. I knew I wasn't going to stay there at the Lawsons. I didn't care much because I had to get up so early and work hard but I didn't want to live with the Lawsons. They wouldn't even let me cry, and sometimes I had to, when I thought of Mama and Papa and how they left us on the boat—and the storm—and how they never came back and then Bill came and said they were drowned. Before they went away Mama made a pie, do you remember, and we ate some of it when it was lightning. You said you weren't afraid, but then of course you were two years older, and I was a girl. I always liked to be with Mama when it lightened.

"And then, Joe, that day at the man's office, when the man named Fritz was taking you away and you whispered you'd meet me at that corner by the drug-store. But I couldn't get away that day. They took me to a place for girls they don't know what to do with. But sometimes I would get away—to that corner, and wait there for you. I waited—and waited—as much as I could get away. But they would come and get me and scold

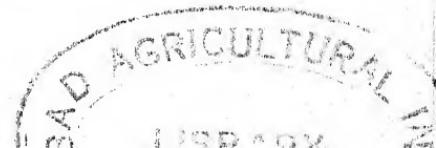
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me and shut me up. And always I thought maybe you were waiting there for me and always I would want to get away. And they didn't find Mama and Papa—their bodies, and I thought maybe you knew something about them I didn't know. I thought maybe they weren't dead at all, and would come back and we would all be together again and Papa would sing and Mama would make a pie again.

"Then the Lawsons took me to their house in the country and I washed dishes and hung up clothes and lots of things. I didn't mind to work—so much. I used to wipe dishes on the boat but we were with Mama and Papa then and you were there and we played.

"And I don't even know what became of Leo and Leo was such a *good* dog. He could swim and everything. And Spottie was going to have kittens just then, and I don't know what became of Spottie. You know we had the box all fixed for her. I always thought maybe you knew more than I did and I wanted to see you and us live together, on a boat, maybe.

"I didn't like the Lawsons because what they said about Mama and Papa. They said they were *shiftless* and I had better forget them. Now we know they weren't shiftless. The Orchards were shiftless—not Mama and Papa. Maybe they didn't always have much money, but that wasn't shiftless. We had clothes and we ate, and



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toys even we had and Leo and Spottie—they ate too and that isn't shiftless.

"But I wouldn't have cared if they were shiftless, I wanted to be back with them—us all together. Papa sang so nice and Mama never wanted us to be afraid. It doesn't seem like people who are good to their children ought to be drowned. Maybe bad people just said they were. They went in the little boat in worse storms than that and there are bad people who say things that aren't true. Like the Lawsons and that man who wanted me to be his little girl and— But that would just make you feel bad. If Papa had been alive—Papa would have killed him, I guess.

"When I write to you I kind of forget I can't send it so then it's as if you were—well, somewhere.

"I was always trying to find out where you had gone. The Lawsons wouldn't tell me. First they said they didn't know. Then they said you had a good home and I had one and we were to live our own lives and a person had to forget the past. But how *can* you? You didn't forget, did you—about how we used to sit around and eat our supper?

"Then a man who came to work at the Lawsons told me you went *that* way, and he pointed to where the sun was going down and said you had gone a long way. So that was the way I went, and as far as I could go. And then John found me in the cemetery and it was raining

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and he took me to their house. And they made me eat and go to bed. And then I stayed there.

"One day something awful happened and I was more afraid than in the lightning. Mr. Lawson. He *came*. He got out of a buggy and came in the house and I ran upstairs and hid and I kept my face in the clothes of the closet so I wouldn't scream and he would come and get me and take me back. I was going to kill myself if he was going to take me back—because Mama and Papa *weren't* shiftless, and you know that, Joe. Then *she* came up—John's mother. And she took my head out of the clothes and put it against *her*, and she said, 'There, there,' and smoothed my hair and said it was going to be all right and that I was to stay there and not go back with Mr. Lawson. And when we went downstairs John's father said, 'Well, that's the last of *him*,' and he told me not to fret, that Mr. Lawson was never coming back. And John told me when we went outside that his father gave Mr. Lawson some money and made him sign a paper and that Mr. Lawson was a skunk and would never be back. And so they said I was to live there with them and I would be their girl as John was their boy. Just as much as John was their boy I was their girl and I was not to worry and I was to be happy with them and John."

("Oh, they were *good* people," sobbed Lydia. "Good

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to the lost girl they found by the cemetery in the rain.
I love them! Love them!"

"So after a while," she read on when tears would let her, "I called John's mother Mother and his father Father. I didn't think Mama and Papa would care because it wasn't like Mama and Papa, and they wanted me to and were good to me. And then, Joe, maybe you found it that way too, and I hope you did, it isn't that you forget, but there are other things too, like going to school and playing, and while you always remember—well, there are other things too. You know, when you live in a place that is where you live, and I even had fun—after while, and is that all right too, and do you sometimes have fun? But I know you did not forget—how Papa sang and Mama and Leo and all.

"But I can't talk to them about that—except just sometimes to John—because they don't know about it and you can't talk to a person who don't know about it, and anyway it seems that is just *us*. So that is why I write to you. Even though I don't know where to send it and even though maybe you will never see it, it isn't so lonesome when I write to you. When I write to you it isn't as if I had—well, left it behind me, and I never did that and I still think some day I will look out the window and you might be coming up the walk."

There ended that letter, and the last of it she could scarcely read—so blurred. Tears had fallen on the words

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Hertha wrote and fell now as Hertha's daughter read. Her head went down to the lonely words—her cheek against them and sobs went through her and a tenderness such as she had never known and never knew could be. "Mother," she said within herself, deeper than words—"if you had told me! I could have understood. I would have *known*—oh, I know I would—about Mama and Papa, and trying to find Joe and wondering about Leo and Spottie. I would have known—and then you wouldn't have been so alone and I wouldn't have been alone. We would have understood together and loved each other so dearly. Dearly—so dearly."

Why—*why* did things come too late?

"But you couldn't—and perhaps no one in the world can understand that better than I understand it."

And yet it wasn't too late. Now she knew who her mother was. It didn't matter that she didn't know her name or who Mama and Papa were or where they came from. She knew this heart—this hurt and loyal heart, brave lonely girl.

She went to the window and in the moonlight looked out at the path up which—long ago—Joe might come. Faith unreasoning—hope not to die. Love.

So touchingly her mother had said it—"It isn't that you forget—but there are other things too—like going to school, and playing. Sometimes I even had fun—and was that all right, Joe? . . . When I write to you it isn't

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as if I had left it behind me. I never did that," her mother had said.

No, you never did that, and that made you—"to yourself." And was that why you didn't love me, or couldn't show you loved me? Afraid to love? Or were you afraid I could love too much—and my heart be hurt as yours had been?

No, she didn't believe that was the reason. In days farther along must lie the reason why one who as a child had loved like this could leave her own child out of love.

She unfolded another paper, worn in the creases, as if many times it had been opened and creased again.

"Now it is Christmas time," she read, "and yesterday we went to town in the sleigh and bought presents for each other. I bought Mother a lace collar and Father a handkerchief and John a book—'Great Men of Our Country.' And I wished I could buy a present for you, Joe; I wished I knew where to send it. I hope you have nice presents and I wish you a Merry Christmas.

"The Staffords are very poor and Mother thought they might not have presents so we bought things for them. They are little children so we bought toys. And that made me think of the Hieforts—if that was the way they spelled it—who were very poor and did not have a boat but lived in that shed on the shore and the snow came in. It made me think how Mama said—I think it was the last Christmas we had Mama and Papa; 'I declare the

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Hieforts may not have anything extra for Christmas,' and we took them one of the ducks Papa shot and cake too.

"So it is Christmas and I think of Mama and Papa, though I do other times too, and of how Papa sang 'Now Hoist Her High—Up to the Sky.'

"We used to hang up our stockings, but you remember that. You are older than I am, you can remember more. I remember the Christmas I got the two little dolls that were twins and I remember the book you gave me, 'The Girl's Own Book'—such nice pictures it had. It must have been left on the boat. So I wish I could send you a present and you could send me one. Even a Christmas card from you I would rather have than a muff from anybody else.

"Well, now it is after Christmas and I thought I would tell you about it. First there was a party at the church and everybody got something. I got a buckle you can put on a belt. John got a baseball and there was a cake with thick frosting and we all sang about Jesus in the Manger. We went with the Nicholases in their bobsled and it was cold but we had lots of robes.

"At home we had turkey for Christmas and of course mince-pie and lots of things. I got a muff and skates and from John a blue scarf to put round my neck.

"What did you get? But of course you can't tell me. You don't know where I am.



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"John always says he is my brother, and, Joe, it does kind of seem now like he is my brother, living in the same house and both saying Mother and Father. But of course you are my *real* brother, and John is just like a brother—a brother I have because I don't have you. I wouldn't want you to think anybody could take your place as my brother.

"There is a boy at school likes me, I guess. He writes notes to me. He said, 'You are the prettiest girl in school.' But I suppose you think that is silly. His name is Fred Ayres. He brings me candy and wants to walk home from school with me. But I start out with Mary so he won't walk with me. I like him, but he wants me to be his *girl*, but how could I, when he doesn't even know who I am? And I couldn't tell him—about Mama and Papa never coming back (though it wasn't their fault). He wouldn't like me if I told him about running away and the lies I had to tell when I was running away and the man who was bad to me—and about John finding me at the cemetery in the rain, as if I had no place to go—and I didn't have either. So what would he think of me if he knew I didn't even know where my own brother is? He wouldn't like me then and I don't see how you can be too much friends with a person if you can't tell him about yourself. It makes you seem kind of funny. I'm friends with Mary, but not too much, be-

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cause I don't even know how I got here and nothing like that ever happened to Mary.

"That's why I like John. He knows some of the things about me and he likes me anyway.

"I'm fifteen now. This letter wasn't all written in one day or even in one year. I write only a little—and then I begin to know I can't send it. But I'm fifteen now, and maybe I'd better stop writing to you, Joe. Maybe even you would think it was silly, writing letters you don't know where to send. But I wish I could tell you something about myself, so you'd know me if you ever saw me. But you would know me if you saw me, wouldn't you? Even if I was very old—if I was thirty years old—you'd know me, wouldn't you? I'd know you if you were thirty years old—your cowlick and your freckles and your whistle.

"I'm not very good at school. So often I am thinking about something else. I just kind of dream—I guess it is, more than I study. John helps me with my lessons. He's smart—John is. I think I look like Mama—though it's hard to tell, yourself, how you look. A man said I was more beautiful than any flower that ever grew. He was staying at the Nicholses. Men look at me. But I suppose you think that's silly. I'm quite big for fifteen. My eyes are blue. But you know that.

"I think I'd like boys and like them to like me, but I

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don't think I should, do you? Because it makes me different—what happened—doesn't it?

"When I began this it was Christmas and now I'm going berrying with John.

"Joe, I will say good-by. In the letters I will say good-by, because I think maybe I shouldn't go on writing the letters. But in my heart I'll never say good-by. Never will I say good-by—to you, or to Mama and Papa. Joe, I have a good home. I hope you have.

"Your loving sister,

"HERTHA."



Chapter XV

ONCE she was in the Holy Land and wondered a good deal about what Jesus was really like. She walked the shores he had walked and wished she had not heard so much about him. If she could make her own story he would be more a person she knew. A tale often told has in it too much of the teller. If just that day—going over the little hills—some simple person, like a mule-driver, had entertained her by telling there had once been such a man there, she would have been very pleased and this man of the story would have been real to her. More real than Sunday-school had ever made him. He would have seemed—well, doubtless naïve, and yet of a strength to make her stronger. She would have considered, with a smile, how the neighbors must have called him simple-minded, as neighbors will when one is different, and she would have been deeply stirred that one could have the heart of a little child and the courage to lay down his life. If only that day she had heard about him—from a woman where she stopped for a drink of water—so clearly she would have seen him stopping at such a house, then walking on down to the shore and talking with fishermen and children. As sim-

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ply as he had said it she would have accepted his having said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me."

Or, better still, if she had that day met him and in greeting he had said, "Blessed are the pure in heart," she would have smiled and said Yes, and the day would be clearer and she would have gone her way more understanding of the next person she met. He would have healed, as they said he could heal, he would have healed her hurt. What greater thing could healing do than heal a hurt hidden deep? And she would have pondered how he had no bitterness or envy and was what they would call an impractical person and so could wander about—wanting things to be kinder and better, caring about the humblest and not at all about his own position in the world. Yet not even valuing himself for this, because it was natural to him. He did not resent wrongs done him, or even being laughed at, and did he *really* know who he was, and was he sometimes lonely when he left one group and went on to another? "He must have been a man it would do one good to know," she had thought that day.

She had no idea why this came back to her mind the day after she read her mother's letters, or why other things that seemed quite irrelevant should be there. They just came—pictures held in memory, speculations never resolved.

Once she walked by a turbulent little stream and all

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at once it became a quiet lake. It had come upon her with such surprise—this change. So little seemed left of the turbulence of the moment before. And whether the stream had been joyful on its rapid way, or angry and assertive, what it became was the quiet lake. Some of it must have gone underneath—on its way unseen—to what goal she could not know.

Once in Paris a shabby old woman had been sitting by herself, and a man came along and gave her a bunch of violets—then was quickly on his way.

She was wandering about looking for flowers she would take up to her mother's grave—the little flowers that came unasked, more often than not unseen. Today they seemed more a gift than the flowers we tend; not man's gift, but from the earth itself. Today it had all the freshness of a thing not known before—that they should be here *this* day—after centuries of flowers had bloomed and gone. The sun of this moment was falling on daisies and wild roses that would in their turn enrich the earth for bright blooming no one now living would see. As she stooped to gather fragrant clover she felt one with years long gone and with years far ahead.

She had never taken flowers to her mother's grave. It would have seemed something like intrusion. Indeed she had not thought of it. And it was not to her mother she took them now. It was to a young girl who wrote her lost brother, "Even a Christmas card from you I would

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rather have than a muff from anybody else." She had the right to offer this girl flowers—because she knew her.

"I am glad you wrote letters to your brother," she thought, "because if you hadn't I might never have known you." The letters had not found their hoped for destination. Theirs was another destiny.

She wondered whether Joe had grieved for his sister as she for him. They must have been a nice family, she thought. Mama and Papa, Joe, Hertha, their dog Leo and the cat named Spottie. They lived on a boat—some-where, and were happy together. And then it struck. And that family was no more. And yet it was, for the girl Hertha said, "In my heart I will never say good-by."

What became of Joe? He had a cowlick and freckles. He whistled. Why, he is my uncle, she thought. And then thought, with even sharper surprise, He is an old man now. And thought, Perhaps he is dead,—the cow-lick, the freckles; the whistle stilled, like Papa's song.

Yet it all seemed to live, and she was making a tune for "Now Hoist Her High—Up to the Sky." She had never heard the song. Had he made it up? It sounded as if it had burst from the work he was doing. They were getting a load onto the boat, and he burst out with the song to help the lifting. She would like a person who made songs for his work. He is my grandfather, she thought, and he sang. That was what his little girl remembered most about him—he sang.

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She placed the offering of today's flowers on Hertha's grave, and even then she was humming under her breath, "Now Hoist Her High—Up to the Sky." It all lived. Loss and sorrow could scarcely have done more—yet in them lived a remembered song.

She felt in life, and walked on over to Henry's.

He was with men down in the field, but he saw her and came up, said he was just coming in anyway. They sat on a bench by the kitchen door. She said she'd like a glass of milk and he got it for her. He laughed and said milk was what they had most of. Now if she had asked for champagne—he supposed she'd drunk lots of champagne—over there.

"I feel as if I'd been drinking it today," she said.

"Well, you—kind of look like it," he laughed.

Oh, she had not shut out the pain of it. What had happened to those children happened again to her. Their sorrow was hers to the heart. She had been lost and bewildered with them and the wrongs done them hurt as if done to herself today, and were hers to fight.

But there was something fortifying—redeeming. She had been lost in her own life and now she knew something was back of her she would rather have than anything heritage could give her. Something *good*. Something staunch and loyal. Love. Love was back of her, and it didn't matter this love hadn't been meant for a person called Lydia. She hadn't even thought of that.

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This was cathartic—too big to be too personal. She could never be lonely in the same way again, for she had been taken in—even though it hadn't been meant she be taken in. She had been taken in because she understood.

"My mother must have been a wonderful person," she said, only half knowing she spoke aloud.

Henry seemed embarrassed, as people did when she spoke of her mother. That wasn't fair. Why be embarrassed before a heart that would not forget?

"She was beautiful, all right," he mumbled.

They always said that—as if that were all there were to say.

"And within too," said Lydia. "I don't know that anyone knew how beautiful she was. How well did you know her, Henry?" she asked abruptly.

"Me? Why I—I only knew her because I played with you kids."

"Yes, of course. Well, I didn't know her either—not till yesterday."

He gave her a startled look, but she was scarcely aware of it. "Your uncle knew her, didn't he?"

"Why—yes. Sure. He used to visit your folks."

"I'd like to see him. Is he here now?"

"Yes. He's back."

Now there was constraint. She had spoken of her mother and even with kind and easy-going Henry there was that awkwardness of things that could not be said,

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and though this was of a brief moment and slight she could feel it pulling her back to what had kept her from ease with people. What was it her mother said about the boy at school who liked her? "You can't talk to a person who doesn't know about it. . . . I don't see how you can be too much friends with a person if you can't tell him about yourself." It wasn't necessary. That boy—Fred Ayres—wouldn't have cared. He would have been fascinated by the story, and so would the girl friend Mary—that must be Mary's mother, who had had the romantic feeling about Hertha. But this girl Hertha couldn't do it. "It makes me different—what happened—doesn't it?" She couldn't get past that, and so it did make her different.

Lydia understood this; the years of most of her life had schooled her in understanding it.

And then she had a sharp thought—thought like a sudden sharp pain. It was because of her mother she understood her mother. Because of what her mother had done to *her*.

Why, it would seem that would be the last thing in the world could happen! That all the days of her life Hertha would think: "*My* little girl is not to suffer that! *She* will not be lost and bewildered. In her life will be nothing to hold her from her playfellows, but in happy ease she is to move among her friends. Never lost—but every day of her life know she is wanted. *That* can make

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it up to me—Mama, Papa, Joe. My happy little girl can make it up to me!"

But—not at all like that. She had been as lost in bewilderment as Hertha by the roadside. There are hurts as deep as death. Hers too the long longing for home, for loved ones lost to her. Both had known this—and Lydia because of Hertha.

How could you let happen to another the very thing in cruelty that had been visited upon you? And how could a loving heart not love her own? How fail to protect when you had yourself suffered dire need of protection?

And she thought—it must have been something farther along. Something happened. Something else. *That* girl—the girl Hertha—would not have let her daughter feel an alien in her own home. She who had known what an unfriendly world could be—would she never even have *wondered* whether her own girl found it friendly? Never once had she asked: "My child, how is it with you? Are people good to you? Are you happy in that far place?"

Not once had she said: "Darling, don't you want to come home now?"—she who knew what it was to lose home and long for it.

Something else happened; something farther along changed the loyal girl who went searching her brother, who never forgot. Or, *did* she forget? Did she at last

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say: "This shall be no more," and with that close her heart to all else?

This seemed so wrong that it could not be true. Yet perhaps it could. Shut in with one's self wrong things happen, until even a valiant spirit might know defeat. To cease to love—that is defeat.

But she had kept the letters written in days when her heart was warm. At times she had thought: "I will tear them up now." (Lydia could see it all.) Had thought: "All that is gone forever; I must burn them now." And she would try, and could not, for not only what she had loved and lost was here, herself was here. The letters lived and she could not destroy them.

And so she had secreted them—with the idea they would not be found, and yet would not cease to be. And had there been an unformed idea—dim unspoken hope—that in ways she could not foresee they might at last find their way? The world is so *big*, she had said. But she had left the letters that were perhaps the most she had ever expressed of what was truly her heart.

And so Lydia did not believe that ceasing to love was the defeat Hertha had known. Something else, she thought. Something I do not know and she could not help.

When she descended the hill toward home she saw excitement there. There were two cars and the children running round one of them—touching it, peering inside.

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Warren and Ivy were there. They had brought out her new car and Warren was going to give her a lesson in driving.

She didn't want to do it today. Well, she'd have to. You can't refuse to learn to drive your new car.

Warren said you couldn't learn before an audience. He'd start her off and then Lydia would take over. Lydia said she'd driven other people's cars a little—along a straight road when no one was coming. "That will be a great help," said Warren.

Ivy said she'd stay right where she was. She could see Warren cross at home, without sitting in on what he'd have to say about Lydia's driving. "You'll never be friends again," she called after them.

So she was prepared when Warren would cry: "Good God—no! You want to *wreck* it?"

Lydia said it was a beautiful day. "You have no time to look at the day," he told her. "A driver has to keep his eyes on the road—especially a dumb one."

But it didn't go so badly, and she could see it was going to be fun. After a time they stopped for practice in stopping and starting, then sat there while he explained things.

"Warren," she asked, "did you know Mother grew up in our house?"

"Yes," he said. "Didn't you?"

She shook her head. "Did they tell you?"

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"No, they didn't. A kind little boy did."

"No kind little boy told me anything."

"He wasn't kind. Kids used to say things."

"They thought our family was queer, didn't they?"

He nodded. Then, "Do we have to go back to that today? It isn't the best way to learn to drive an automobile."

"I wonder why Mother and Father never talked about it."

"You know there were things they didn't talk about."

Yes, she very well knew that.

"I want to see Father," she said abruptly. "I could drive my car up there."

"Not at this rate you couldn't."

"Lydia," he almost besought her, "don't try to see Father. I told you before—it would upset him, and you; no good could possibly come of it."

"It's hard for me to believe that. I wouldn't—bother him. I wouldn't ask things. I'd tell things. I'd tell him about myself—the places I've been and how people live there. He used to be interested in what he called foreign parts. The days must be long. You can't play chess with the doctor all the time. This would break up one day for him—give him something to think about. Why, I don't suppose he ever knew anybody who had been in Syria."

"My dear," Warren said, "he doesn't give a *damn* about

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Syria. Try to understand how it is. He's left this life. He wants it to be that way."

She wanted to be with him—if only once—because he had been good to the little girl he took in out of the rain. "I can't talk to them, except sometimes to John," Hertha had said. He helped her with her lessons. They went berrying together. "John is good to me," she would write to her brother.

"After all, he is my father," she said. "I can't believe he has no interest in me. I wouldn't go there prying—of course not. I wouldn't ask him questions. I just want to be with him—a little while. Then he could see what I am like now. That things are all right with me. It would be a satisfaction—surely it would. He would think, 'Well, Warren is all right and now Lydia is all right too.' That's a satisfaction about your children, isn't it?"

Warren didn't speak. "I don't see why he should lose us entirely—because of what happened. What must he think of me—so near—and never coming to see him?"

Warren started to speak, but checked himself. "I'll take the wheel now," he said, after looking at Lydia, who was looking up at the willow tree.

"No, no, I want to go on with it. I'm really interested, Warren, and you're good to give me the time."

She wouldn't talk to Warren about it again; she was sorry she had today. He had this idea and wouldn't change, but she believed he was wrong. Something in

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her *felt* he was wrong. Suppose she didn't go, and her father was wanting to see her? Suppose he thought she held away from him because of what he had done. How could she risk his thinking that—when he was alone there—everything gone.

And yet it frightened her—the thought of going, Warren so strongly against it. Perhaps she should go and see Judge Kircher. He knew all about it; he had helped arrange things. Possibly she had to get permission to go. And if he said it would be all right . . .

Chapter XVI

DIEGO, Koula, Pancho and Hans were celebrating their first Fourth of July. Pancho with nothing but distaste. Ears and hoofs proclaimed that on this day he was definitely not an American. Hans was under the bed. But Koula and Diego were loving their country without stint. Lydia assisted and watched and prayed.

She had explained the holiday when they bought the firecrackers. It was for fun, but like other fiestas there was a reason for it. On Fourth of July Americans made a great noise—that was because they had a great thing to celebrate. The night before she read from the Declaration of Independence, out of the old reader from which she and Warren had learned it. The noble words could do no harm, whether they understood all of them or not. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Thus the brave words rolled from the past—for a child from Greece and the boy from Mexico.

Most courageous of all the words seemed to her—the pursuit of happiness. That was so much to ask. The men

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who subscribed to those words had come through danger and confronted stern and immediate things. But they did not omit the pursuit of happiness. They gave it high place—inalienable right, endowed by the Creator.

And what was this happiness they declared was our right? Sometimes shooting off a firecracker. Often seeing others happy—seeing children happy. And sometimes a light that breaks when you have been long in the dark. When you have been trying to puzzle out the pattern of life, and have fitted a few stubborn pieces together, happiness is in the cry: “That’s it! *I see.*” It’s there in us—the need to understand the life we live. Perhaps that’s an inalienable right—if only we knew how to claim, win our right.

“No, no, Koula—you can’t hold on to it! When Diego lights it for you throw it as far as you can. No! Not *at* anybody!”

Oh, dear! Goodness! Had Father and Mother worried this way about her—when she was hurling firecrackers all over the place?

She heard a car, and with a word of caution to Diego about Koula—you could trust Diego—went round the house.

An elderly gentleman was getting out of his car. He stood looking at her as she came up to him. He held out his hand and said: “You’re little Lydia.”

“And you’re—”

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"No, you don't know. You haven't changed as much as I have."

"You're Judge Kircher!"

"Now, how did you know that?"

"Partly remembering. And because I've been thinking about you."

"Henry said you asked about me. I was much pleased. I've been meaning to come and see you. Fourth of July is an odd time to choose, but I had to leave home. I live next the Stephens. They have five boys. Five. And each boy has many friends. I didn't know boys had that many friends."

"So you jumped out of the frying pan"—Addie's boy Roy was letting go with something that tore the air—"onto the barricades."

He said there was more room here for escape. But instead of escape he wanted to go round the house and see the children.

They were at home with him almost at once. He shot a few crackers and told how he had once burned his hand—you had to be careful with the tricky things. Then he picked up a package he had with him. These were for after dark, he said. One of them would make American flags up in the air.

As they were leaving the children he pointed back to Diego. "I was about his age when I came to this country.

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I've never been sorry I came and I don't think he will be. Not with you. That was a fine thing you did, Lydia."

Like the children, she felt at home with him. He was so kindly and easy; you felt you could count on him. Warren said he had been good about things. Yes, he would be—a good friend. You felt he really was a judge, that he could judge what was right, without fear but not harshly. He had known Father and Mother well.

They went through the kitchen into the dining-room and he stood there looking around, for a moment saying nothing. He went into other rooms, with little to say at first. Then he sat down as if suddenly tired, or as if dwelling with something of his own.

He roused and smiled at her. "You've done it beautifully, Lydia. It still seems the old place, and yet it's so friendly now. As if it could both remember and smile."

She liked that.

"And the last time I was here," he mused, "I wouldn't have believed anybody would ever want to be here again."

She didn't speak as he sat there thinking. "And now you're here," he said heartily.

She nodded and smiled, and as he looked at her his face changed. "I heard a perfectly damnable thing. I heard you came home believing your father had died."

"Yes," she said.

"And then you had to hear the whole thing."

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"I didn't hear very much," she said. "Even yet I don't know much."

He looked troubled.

"You come to know things in unexpected ways," she said, as if she would not exact anything of him. "The other day I came much closer to Mother."

He gave her such a swift startled look. "How was that?" he asked.

She told him about the old trunk—the keepsakes, and even spoke of the letters.

"I see," he would say, but to himself.

"Did you know about this brother?"

He nodded. "But just a little."

"Was he never—heard from?"

He shook his head.

"Such a cruel way to do it!"

"Yes—cruel. They didn't do those things so well then."

"She stopped writing to him when she was fifteen. I don't know how it was with her—after that."

He did not seem to be thinking of Lydia.

"She seemed such a loving person then."

"She was—a loving person."

And while she didn't want to disturb his thoughts she couldn't help saying: "I wonder why it didn't include me."

He seemed to come from a long way off, and then to

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be troubled about her. "Oh, you can't tell," he said. "We know that things aren't always as they seem."

Now she couldn't resist talking to him. "For years I've wondered what was the matter with me. Why Mother didn't love me. Why I was kept away from home."

He seemed about to say something, but instead murmured so compassionately: "Poor Lydia." And under his breath, "It fell on you."

She wished he would tell her what it was fell on her. He could—she felt sure of that. Yet perhaps he couldn't. Some confidence—something he held inviolate—a loyalty to the past. They sat there in the pleasant room, shaded from the glare of the sun, she with this old friend of her parents. And she wanted to say: "But this is *now*. This counts too." It was hard to be with one who was kind and just—a friend—and still feel left out. He doesn't know what it would mean to me, she thought. He doesn't realize that what he knows—no matter what it may be—could free me. I can say: "I have been so long in the dark," but no one knows what I mean.

Then she bethought herself of other things. This was an old friend of her mother and father. He had come for another visit at the old place—had come to visit her after her years away, and he looked older now than when he came in. This was a sadder judge than the man who played with the children. She wouldn't spoil his good friendly visit.

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"What does one drink on the Fourth of July?" she laughed. "I've been away so long I don't know."

After they had considered tea, coffee and lemonade they decided a little Spanish sherry would be an excellent celebration of the American Fourth.

Over the wine and cakes he asked her about herself and she chatted on about places she had been and things she had done. He seemed interested and she thought, "This is what I had thought might interest Father."

So she ventured: "I had been meaning to come and see you. I want your advice about something."

He smiled upon her. "My advice is all yours, Lydia. For what it is worth."

"It's about Father. I want to go and see him."

His brows knit. "I suppose you do," he said.

"Warren thinks I shouldn't. Warren hardly ever goes himself. He says Father doesn't want him; wouldn't want me. Now that is hard for me to believe," she said simply.

"Yes. Yes, I suppose it is."

"Do you ever go to see him?" she asked.

He shook his head. "Rarely. Not for a long time. I don't think he cares to have me come," he explained. "There is much in what Warren says."

"But sometimes he must be lonely. And he hasn't seen me for such a very long time. Wouldn't he be interested—in what I am like?"

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"One would think so," he smiled. "What you are like is—I think you're a pretty wonderful person, Lydia."

"No. No, I fear I can't claim that. But after all—he's my father."

So many silences seemed to fall between them. "You have daughters?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. Three."

"If you had only one, and hadn't seen her in nineteen years, wouldn't you like to have her come and see you?"

"Yes, I would," he granted.

"Then why is it so different with Father?"

He sat considering. "Because he is different," was all he seemed able to say. "It is different with him now. And—I think it would hurt you, Lydia."

"It hurts me not to go."

"Yes, I can see that," he said.

"I wish I could tell you—wish I could make clear—" He frowned and seemed waiting for the right thing to say.

"It's like this," he began again. "Things happen to change us. Sometimes we let things go—let go all the things that have been our life. I haven't. You haven't. But your father has. All of that is behind him. He doesn't want to connect with it again. I don't know that he could. Anyway, it would be painful to him. He is as through with it as if he were dead."

She sat trying to understand. "You see—I just can't be-

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lieve that. Warren said it. Now you say it. But me—I can't believe it."

"I believe it. I think the kindest thing is to let him alone—hard though it may be for you."

"But suppose you are wrong," she said, after she had weighed his words. "You might be wrong," she smiled wistfully, "mighthn't you?"

"I might. I don't think I am."

Her eyes were perplexed, troubled. "But that is worse than being really dead. So much more lonely. To be dead while you are still alive—it just doesn't seem *right*."

"Unless his mind—" she went on, after he seemed about to speak but didn't. "Was it the shock of—what he did?"

He shook his head. "No, it was like this before he shot that scoundrel. That wasn't much of a shock. And his mind is there all right. Only—this is what his mind wants. It was the same when he was here alone in this house—ever since your mother died. And he isn't dead. He has something." Very softly he said: "He lives with *her*. He doesn't want anything else to intrude."

Through tears she murmured: "It doesn't seem the right kind of love."

"It's his kind of love. It was his kind of love through most of his life."

She thought back to her own life in this house, and knew something of what he meant.

"Why?" she suddenly demanded. "Why did it have

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to be that way with Father and Mother?" For she was thinking, as many times before—surely you can love as much and still love life and others near you. More. It should make you love them more.

"Why? Oh, I don't know why," he said.

"Yes, you do," she said softly. But said no more of that.

When they went outside for him to go they started walking a little way, as people do when they can't feel they have finished their visit. The children had gone over to Addie's. It was quiet now. Only Hans—who had ventured from under the bed—went rustling about. They were walking up toward the cemetery—just because their feet seemed to have turned that way.

He stopped and looked back at the house. "You've done it so well," he said approvingly. "I hope you'll have some happiness here, Lydia."

He said it wistfully, and then had turned from the house to the hilltop of the dead. He said: "I have more friends here than I have in houses." He was silent, then added: "Many friends."

He turned to her. "And now you are my friend. Aren't you?"

"I am your friend," she said.

"And I want to be your friend. I wish I could be a wise friend. You're worth a lot, Lydia."

"Me?"

"You. You're so good. There is so much you could re-

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sent, and you don't resent. You were hurt—don't think I don't know that. You could be hard and bitter. But you're loving."

He took her arm and they started back. "So live your own good life. Don't let a past you don't understand—keep you from being Lydia."

She could scarcely speak, so moved by what he said. But she said: "I could live a better life if I did understand."

"I know. I know. Some time we'll understand it all. Maybe. So they say. And when we do—what then? A book will have opened. A cloud will have parted—" He broke off. "It's an old man who is talking to you."

When they were back at his car she said: "You say I am a loving person. You'll find I am also a stubborn one. About Father. I want to be with him—maybe only one hour—while he still lives. While I could still speak to him I want to speak to him. I love him. I wouldn't trouble him. I can't give up the idea he would be glad to see me. So in spite of what you say—and Warren—if I feel I have to go—*could* I go? Would I be allowed?"

He stood looking at her—troubled. Then he smiled. "Stubborn Lydia. Stubborn and loyal. Well, I couldn't legally stop you. And I wouldn't. It's taking a chance. Yours the responsibility. A great one. Should we call back the dead?" And then he said, more to himself than her: "Can faith be wrong?"

Chapter XVII

WARREN came out for them and they went in town so the children could see the fireworks. Lydia had said she could drive her car in and he said she gave him the horrors. "Fools rush in where angels fear—"

"To shift," she finished it.

"You'll *learn* first, my girl."

They stopped at Ivy's for a picnic supper and then all started off together for Highland Park, a high place where they could see the whole works, Warren said.

The children drank pop and were in ecstasy. Yet tormented too, fearing they would miss something while looking elsewhere. "I want to see *every single thing*," said Koula. "And it's all at *once*."

"Just take in a general view of it," laughed Warren. "It's everything together makes it good."

"I haven't seen this for years," Lydia said happily. Each had its own pattern, and all together they made a pattern, and that was better than any one of them, as Warren said.

She loved to watch Diego. He was so intent. He wasted little time on words or pop.

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It was hard to propose home, for there were still stragglers going up into the sky. She said: "You know we have our own at home. If we're too late we'd have to neglect the ones your friend the judge brought you."

Ivy said Fourth of July always destroyed her, so she'd turn in. It was only Warren drove out with them. "Now I'll shoot the works!" he cried.

They went away from the house and the big trees, a little way up the hill where there was a pause in the hill, a flat place Warren said was okay. He was almost as excited as the children, and it was as if she and Warren were children here together once more.

"Oh, how beautiful," she murmured, as a great bouquet opened high in the air, spread and held there like a huge umbrella, flooding with color the trees and house below, and including in glory the stones for men and women who as children—and for children—had once sent flaming patterns into the sky. "It's for you too," she thought, and had a happy fancy of their not being excluded from a day that had once been memorable to them.

"And now for the last," Warren cried, and this was the flags the good judge had promised. They held and dimmed and Lydia found herself repeating, "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

"That's right," said Warren. "You kids have got a

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good country, and don't you forget it. And now to bed, before you're asleep on your feet."

Koula mumbled sleepily, "How could you be asleep on your feet?" She started to laugh, but was too sleepy.

"They've had a grand day," Lydia said, when the children were in bed and she and Warren sitting over a glass of beer.

"You're good to them, Lydia. In fact, you're a good scout." He was jovial tonight. He said he had always liked to shoot fireworks. They talked about Fourths they had blasted their way through. Things like—"Do you remember that picnic when Joey Dyer burned his pants?"

She wished Father had been here. Surely he'd have liked that momentary glory over his old roof. Did they have fireworks where he was? Did he watch—if they did have?

She didn't speak of this, or of thoughts Judge Kircher's visit had left with her. Warren was more like a boy tonight and he had little enough of this mood. She couldn't hurt it any more than she could have hurt the children's day. Like them he was getting sleepy now, and soon he was off.

She put things away, then prowled around a little, as one sometimes will when everyone else is in bed. The old clock had come home the day before. She compared it with her watch. Yes, it was going to keep time again, now that it had been all cleaned and gone over. That

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first day she came in the house it had seemed strange not to hear the clock ticking—Father had always been so particular about winding it. It had told them when to go to school and when to bed, told it was time for supper. She remembered how she used to want to set it back as bedtime neared. But she hadn't dared. "It keeps good time," Father used to say.

It had kept time for Father and Mother—she didn't know how many years. Kept time seemed a funny phrase, for it was one thing you couldn't keep. If the old clock could suddenly speak, tell about the moments it had ticked away. . . . Had they seemed to go fast, or slow? No matter how they seemed, they were irrevocable. Happy or sad—they went and were no more.

Now the clock stood on the mantel of the new fireplace in the dining-room. It wasn't a very good-looking old clock, seemed a trifle ungainly in its dignified position on the mantel, but it belonged there—ticked away so many seconds for the people of that house. It had a loud tick, as if to say: Time is time and you might as well know there is to be no fooling about it.

What would Father think about her having put in fireplaces? New-fangled notions, he would probably say, for in his time fireplaces were about discarded as not throwing out enough heat. The one in the oldest part of the house had been bricked up. The house might have been happier had there been fireplaces. And what would

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he say about the furnace? The furnace was to keep them from freezing, and the fireplaces—an open fire warms the soul. People can talk around it, and dream.

She was getting sleepy herself, and things get more simple when sleep is about to take it all off your hands for a while. Father shouldn't be all alone. He should at least know they were thinking of him. While you are still in life you shouldn't be as alone as if you were dead. It wasn't the way it was meant to be—she didn't care what the rest of them said.

A great responsibility—the judge said about her going there. That gave her pause. Might she stupidly destroy what he had made for himself—wanted? He had built walls around him and couldn't be reached. What she couldn't believe was that he wouldn't want to be reached. He might think not, but if he *were* reached—wouldn't it be different and wouldn't he be glad to feel life touch him again? And no one had tried. Even when they went there she suspected they had accepted rather than tried—in awe of a state strange to them. It had to be that way, they had thought. Fear—fear of going into strange places, the fear of the unknown. She had that too—but an urge that was stronger.

Perhaps she didn't know enough about love. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," Warren said about her driving the car, and would say of this. But what were

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the angels? Angels guarding him alone with his love? They didn't seem very good angels to her.

No, perhaps she didn't know enough about love. Not that kind of love. She was always thinking love shouldn't wall us in, should open us to life. This love was for a woman long dead. To Lydia it seemed only living moments could keep your loved one in life. Memory. With memory alone you cannot live. When you clasp a hand or hear a voice, when the breeze is on your face and you hear the trees, when you smell the hay cut yesterday—then other days have life in you.

Perhaps I could make him laugh, she thought. We aren't alive if we don't laugh.

He hadn't laughed enough. In this his home he had laughed little, and often that laugh was for a purpose—to ease or try to brighten for Mother. Always thinking of how it was for Mother. Even then he dwelt with something he would not have the rest of them touch. He was too much troubled, there were too many fears. He dwelt so much with one thing—whatever it was—that he feared to go out to the rest of them, as if afraid they would come in a little way. And she thought as she had many times before: How strange was the life of this house. There was something rigid in her father all those years. Yet he had not been without little escapes, and they had seemed to do him good. Sometimes he would laugh with her or console her, joke or in fatherly man-

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ner chide, and then he seemed more as he had been meant to be. And so she wondered if he couldn't have those escapes again and at the last ease a little from the one great thing that had so changed him, ease into the little things that thirteen-year-old boy, whose picture she liked in the album, had seemed to expect from life. Maybe he could laugh about Pancho, and tell the doctor when they were playing chess: "My daughter is such an impractical girl. She brought a donkey all the way from Mexico. Now what in the world does she want with a donkey?" he might quizzically ask the doctor, and maybe smile.

Sometimes we may not know we have arrived at a decision but in devious ways our minds begin making plans for carrying it out. At no time before Lydia went to bed that night did she say, "I am going." There was always a balancing—fear the others might be right was pitted against her own feeling they were wrong. A fear to tamper—an urge to alleviate.

But it did suddenly become imperative she master driving the car. She became quite shameless in conscripting people to drive with her. Joe—when he had to wait a little while for Addie. Ivy—when she had invited her out for lunch. "I didn't know I had to *pay* for my food," Ivy said. And "Greater love hath no man—" she said.

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She also said: "You aren't so bad. Don't let Warren get you down. He hates new drivers—especially women. He thinks we should all be born knowing how to shift gears."

She had a pleasant afternoon with Ivy. They chatted of this and that—the price of meat—fall styles—how to get fleas off a dog. Why didn't Lydia want to play bridge, since she knew how? Lydia said she had played so much bridge just because there was nothing else to do. Talked of Ivy's children. Harriett was too vain and John too fresh. What was she to do about that? Of houses. Ivy wanted her first floor done over—she was sick of that gray. Lydia liked this meandering talk and felt pleasantly at home with her sister-in-law.

In fact, Ivy was continuing, the whole house should be done over, as Elfreda's was last year. But where was the money coming from? "You were in luck to meet a man who gave you a hundred thousand dollars," she laughed. "I've never met such a man." (Ivy must feel at home with her too, or she'd never have said that.)

To Lydia it had always seemed natural enough for Mr. Blake to leave her this money. He did it because he wanted to.

"He must have been a very charming man when he was young," she was saying to Ivy. "He still was, though when I knew him he was seventy, and in so much pain it hurt his hands to hold a book. That was why I used

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to read to him. When he left for Florence I went too, because we had grown sort of used to each other."

"Upon my word," laughed Ivy, "you did live a free and roving life. Didn't people think it odd?"

"Why, no," said Lydia, "why should they? And then he went on to Baden, and I've always wished I had gone with him. Because he was alone when he died. I don't think we should be alone when we die, do you?"

"I don't think we should die at all," said Ivy firmly. "I am opposed to the idea."

Lydia laughed and her thoughts went unspoken for the moment. She wouldn't want Father to be alone when he died; Mr. Blake had known Mother, his face would change as he spoke of her. He didn't speak of her often and she never contrived to have him do so for she always feared she would let it be known her mother hadn't loved her, or that he would see how little she knew of her mother, and this might change either his feeling toward her or toward her mother.

She used to wonder how he had ever come to know her at all. Mother's life was so quiet out there on the farm and his must have been social and gay. She wished now she had asked him about that. She was always holding back from things.

Judge Kircher had this feeling about Mother. His face too changed when her name was spoken—as if a presence were evoked, as if the light had changed. Mr. Blake

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was old when Lydia knew him and the judge old now, but memory of Mother could quicken and transform. Dull years released them and old eyes saw beauty in which young eyes had rejoiced, and there seemed a tender gratefulness that such beauty had been in the world. Perhaps Ivy was right in being irrationally opposed to death. Beauty like that shouldn't die. Well, it didn't—not in the memory of men who had seen it glorify the world. And with Father—he was letting go all the rest of life to live alone with that beauty he had known. And again came her fear for him: It isn't the way. You will lose it that way.

Ivy was advising more gas for the hill.

She became fond of the car because it brought pleasant contacts with people. People become very kindly when they are helping you with something they know which you don't know. They think you need them and that makes for friendliness. You are under their wing, and they watch your growth with satisfaction. Even getting out of patience and blowing up is part of this generous doing something for you.

They were doing more than they knew, for they were helping get her ready for something very important to her. Even yet she hadn't said to herself she was going—but she wanted to be ready.

One afternoon Mary came out, saying it was too grand a day to waste and proposed Lydia drive her around.

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There was a bowl of apples on the dining-room table; Mary took two of them and they got some cookies Addie had baked that morning, sugar sprinkled on top as the children liked. Mary said they'd drive to Duck Creek—"That road's poor and will be practise. Anybody can drive on a good road."

This was nice—making a lesson into a picnic.

A little way back of the house Mary said, "This was where all the fuss was once. Did you ever hear about how they wanted to put the railroad through here and your father wouldn't sell his place and somehow or other kept them from condemning it?"

Mr. Blake had been involved with this—some engineering job it entailed. That must have been how—

"That was before we were born," Mary was saying. "Mother told me about it. Your father put up a big fight, and people wondered why, because he would have had good money for the place."

Lydia suspected why. Mother wouldn't want to move. She always seemed to want to stay right there. It was very rarely she even went into town. "No, Father wouldn't want to move," she said. "He never would consider selling the place."

"And then he left it to me," she added.

"Which was a grand idea," said Mary.

Ahead was the old school-house, where their mothers had been friends. It wasn't used now; children around

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there were picked up in a bus and taken to school in town. The Walnut Hill school it was called, but to this side nearest the Chippmans the trees were birch. She stopped the car. "Practise," she said, but she was looking out and could see just the place where that other Mary had seen Hertha coming through the birch trees—timid, her first day at school. She stepped from the trees, Mary's mother had said, and the sun on her hair . . .

"I can see them coming out the door," she said now to Mary. "Your mother small and dark, and mine a bigger girl, her hair light gold. I suppose it was in braids; it didn't curl."

"Carrying their books," Mary went on with it; "and at recess they ate an apple and a cookie."

And Lydia was also seeing the boy Fred Ayres edging around, wanting to walk home with Hertha. But Hertha wouldn't let him—"Because how can you be friends with a person if you can't tell him about yourself? He wouldn't like me if he knew." So early that had to begin—a feeling Lydia knew to her hurt.

From these windows her mother had looked thinking the brother she had lost might be coming down the road to find her. She wasn't very good at lessons. She dreamed too much.

"Did they remain friends after they grew up?" she asked Mary.

"I don't think they saw much of each other after

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Mother moved to town." She paused and went on a little hesitantly: "Mother spoke of going out to see her once, some years after they were in school together. It was soon after your father's parents died. You know they died in the same week."

"No, I didn't know."

"Mr. Chippman had been sick a long time. I don't know what it was with his wife. Worn out, perhaps. But they were buried within a few days of one another."

These were the people who had said: "As much as John is our boy, you are our girl." The *good* people. Died the same week. . . . Perhaps she wanted to go with him—and had just let go.

"It made Mother think about Hertha—how it must have been such a shock to her, the two deaths at once, and she wondered what Hertha would do, whether she and your father would stay on there. So she went out to see her."

"It was good of her," Lydia murmured, and feeling really grateful.

"But she felt—well, she felt your mother wasn't very glad to see her. She wouldn't talk to her, Mother said. She was stunned, perhaps. Mother felt so sorry for her, and for your father. It left them alone there."

Lydia did not speak.

"Very soon after that they were married," Mary said.

"It must have seemed strange," said Lydia.

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"I suppose it did at first. People had gotten used to thinking of them as the same family."

And you would think they had grown used to it, Lydia thought.

"But certainly they had a right to get married if they wanted to," said Mary.

"And what about you?" she asked gaily, as if fearing she was leading Lydia to thoughts too somber for their good day. "How come you never got married, Lydia?"

"I did—in a way," laughed Lydia, and told about it; she didn't mind telling Mary about Henri. She had never talked to anyone about him.

"So you see I wasn't much of a success," she finished.

"There must have been something wrong about *him*," said Mary. "Look how you look!"

"That's what *he* said," she laughed.

"Never mind him. Why the world must be full of men who've been crazy about you."

"Not overcrowded," laughed Lydia. "Though there have been some," she granted, not without the pride of having been desired.

The holding away had been on her side, as with Hertha who wouldn't let Fred Ayres carry her books home. And she had wanted to be loved. It wasn't that she had wanted—all her nights alone. She knew what she had missed. She had wanted that love and closeness to know full well enough what she didn't have. But to love you

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must be free—free of the things that had always held her to herself.

She had known the excitement of men being attracted to her—and her own excitements too. On boats—on islands—in the desert and in the cities of her wanderings; on beaches and in gay cafés she had known the stir of being desired. And more than once she had thought: Why not? Take it for what happiness it may offer—if not happiness, pleasure, excitement—a little madness and a little warmth. Better the semblance of love than a life alone, the casual if she was not to know the real. Let sex have its way—and who cared what she did? Oh, very close to it—times more than once. “Why don’t you have affairs?” a woman had said to her. “It passes the time so agreeably.” But something deeply herself denied her this. Who cared? She cared. A fastidiousness—whatever it might be, held her back. It seemed playing at love, and love was too much for that. Excitement said yes, and what way down deep was Lydia Chippman said no—it is better to be lonely than be second-rate in love. And anyway it isn’t excitement makes one less lonely.

She had loved Henri. It had been gay rather than profound, but real within its own limitations. But it ended because all of herself was not there. “What are you so afraid of?” he asked. And she hadn’t known she was afraid then—their gaiety, his love, had made her happy

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and in this interlude old fears were in abeyance. She didn't give herself because she didn't know the self she would give. She lived—loved—with part of herself. He had felt this and felt defrauded.

Twice after that she had been really loved and once she could have loved, and made a life. But she turned from this as she had from the light loves that offered after she left Henri, and for an opposite reason—this time because it threatened to be real. Horrid to have a feeling of being discovered when you don't know what there may be to discover. How could she say, "Something is wrong with me and you will find that out and not want to love me. I would tell you what it is," she might have said, "but I do not know myself."

Playing with love was not good enough for her, and uncertainties blocked her way into reality. "So I fell between the two," she concluded her thoughts, and found she had said it aloud.

"What did you say, Lydia?"

"I said I have probably been a fool. But could I help it? I don't know how I could have helped it."

Chapter XVIII

LYDIA asked Addie's husband to get her a road map of that part of the state. Warren would have been glad to give her an automobile map, but he would laugh and ask if she were thinking of a trip—and that might put an idea in his head and she wanted no argument with him. She told Addie and Joe she had always liked maps.

She would spread it out on the dining-room table and the children were fascinated with it too. She told them all these lines were places to go, and they would make trips on the map. Later they would make them on the road, she said.

And when she was alone she would study one particular trip. She became well acquainted with the trip on the map. It looked such a little way on paper. On the road it was ninety-three miles.

She was much more at ease with the car now and had driven in traffic with Warren. He said she wasn't so bad. She was always to keep her head—that was the great thing, and she said yes she would keep her head. He wouldn't think so if he knew.

Four or five times she started out on this trip, know-

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ing she was not going the whole way but just to get used to starting, and there was an excitement even in this.

Then she began making her plan with Addie. She was going to be away for a day. She might even be away overnight. (For how could she tell how long she might be there?—and she didn't want too long a drive after dark.) Could Addie stay there that night—or take the children to her house? It would be better to take them home with her, Addie thought. And she'd look after them during the day—either here or at her house. They'd be all right; Miss Chippman was not to worry. Yes, she'd take the pup too.

And if anyone came out that day Addie was to say—Well, what *was* she to say? Just say she'd be back tomorrow. They might wonder and worry, but she'd tell them after she returned. She wouldn't mind their knowing then, but she wasn't going to have any fuss about it beforehand. She explained to the children she couldn't take them this time. She'd be taking them soon—nice trips.

So the morning came when she rose very early and started out to find her father.

She had thought of writing to him first, but if he had time to think it over he might tell her not to come. She clung to the idea that when he saw her he would be glad.

Just take it easy, she would say to herself. It's very

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simple. You know the way. You know every town and every turn. Just keep on driving till you get there, and then you will say, "Hello, Father—I thought I'd come and see you."

That wasn't simple—and she knew it. But she would be all right when she came to it. She would say, "It's been such a long time, Father—" No, don't think of that now.

The day was fresh, cooler than the last weeks had been. She was glad it wasn't oppressive. A fresh day. Good augury.

She was wearing a blue linen suit and soft hat with a brim. She thought she looked all right—clothes like everybody else's. She didn't want to startle Father. Didn't want to look like "foreign parts"—wanted, as much as she could, to look like the girl he had put on the train and sent away with Aunt Jenifer. (Sent away. Never mind that.) No lipstick. She must remember not to smoke. She wanted the people there to approve of her father's daughter. Perhaps they would say, "You must come again, Miss Chippman. You've done your father so much good."

Oh she *hoped* they would say that.

Men were working in their fields, as so often she had seen her father working in his. She passed men driving to town with their produce, as he had done.

Probably he wouldn't speak of Mother at all, and she

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mustn't. Mustn't intrude. But perhaps he would want to hear about the house—what she had done. Well, she would see. She drove slowly, but the hours and miles went by. She was close now.

At last she was entering the town. She would have to stop here and inquire her way to the sanatorium, which was in the country. "No left turn!" a policeman roared at her. She righted the error she had about made and smiled at him; he seemed disposed to smile back.

So she pulled up and asked her way. "Straight ahead till you come to the bridge. Cross the bridge and turn right. Go about a mile and turn left. You can turn left there," he grinned. "That's a lane, and it leads right to it."

He was so friendly now she hated to leave him and turn up this lane alone. They were before a lunch-room. "I think I'll stop here and get a cup of coffee," she confided to him. "A cup of coffee is always a good idea," he agreed. "You can leave your car right here for half an hour."

She sat on a stool and drank coffee from a thick cup. She wished she could go on doing that. She dreaded turning into the lane that led to the place.

But she went back to her car, crossed the bridge, drove a mile, and there was the lane. She turned into it.

It was a pleasant lane between fields. Father would like this fertile country. He could watch the grain grow

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taller, and head. On hot days he would think, "Well, this is good for the corn." Off yonder an apple orchard. Perhaps he talked crops with the man who worked the place. She was glad this institution, whatever they called it, wasn't in town. If you have never lived in a town you are much more at home among things that grow. She must remember to tell him how Henry had sprayed the trees. He would be glad they weren't neglected. And tell about the garden. Yesterday they had their own tomatoes.

Ahead were trees. She must be coming to it now. She would go in and say, "I am Mr. Chippman's daughter. I have come to see him."

Yes, there it was—large white house, a wide green lawn. "Why, it looks very nice," she said to her trembling self.

She stopped before she came to the driveway. She'd walk across the lawn and get her breath—stop this thumping of her heart.

She went in the gate and closed it gently as if to make no noise. Just inside was a clump of lilac bushes. They had a big bush at home. Mother had liked the lilacs. She remembered one spring they lost them all in a late frost and—

Then she stood stock-still. A man was sitting on a bench under the maple tree. Not far away. Only a little way. But he made no move. He hadn't seen or heard her.

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He did not seem to be seeing or hearing anything—absorbed in what he thought.

That was her father.

She couldn't move. She'd wait till *he* moved—till he seemed to know what was around him. She couldn't break in just then. And her heart pounded so hard and her knees were so weak she couldn't have gone even that little way.

She took a few backward steps into the lilac clump. There was a flat-topped boulder. She sank down to it, her hands palms down on either side of her, as if holding herself up.

She'd wait till he moved. Then she could move. There was something in his stillness made it impossible to break.

She saw only his profile. His hands loosely together in his lap, his feet not crossed, not stretched out. A little bowed but not leaning back. As if comfort were nothing, an easy position no matter. She wished he would put one arm along the back of the bench. She wished he would cross his knees and lean back. *Something*. Some move—not as if *fixed* there. He was looking straight ahead, but she felt he did not see the waving field his eyes could be seeing. "I had thought it would be a comfort to him," she thought—"to see it healthy, see it growing—the good grain of another summer."

Well, sometimes it was an interest, she tried to tell herself. This immobile moment was just *one* moment. Of

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course he moved around and looked at things and knew that was a maple tree over his head and knew this grass was green. *Sometimes* he knew the birds were singing.

Not now. It was all within. This was a stillness not of the outer world. Things moved for him, but not things she could see move. He was seeing—but not what she could see.

She tried to make her hands lift her up. If she sat here much longer she would become fixed too and could not move at all. She would cross that little stretch of green and say, “Father?”

A man with a rake came round the house. Now her father would see this man and it would change. He would move and then she could move. But the man passed quite near him—and he remained as alone in the world as if this other human being were not going about the good business of raking grass on the far side of the lawn.

“Father looks pretty well,” she told herself, for the man moving across the lawn had done a little for her. *He* could move—and she would in just a moment now. Her father looked older, of course. His hair was white. But he would be her father if he weren’t sitting there so still.

There was a sudden stronger breeze and the windmill behind the house began to turn with an abrupt clatter.

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He had not heard it. He did not know the breeze was stronger.

"Oh, what *is* it, Father?" she was crying to herself. "There are other things too. There are all these other things.

"I'm Lydia. I'm here." For he seemed to be denying her as much as if he had said no after he knew she was there. "Why—*Father*," she gasped, as we do when we are stopped. This far she had come. Could she not go the little way that was left?

The gentle stretch of lawn was a chasm between worlds.

She thought of how she loved him and how she believed he had loved her. "Father," voiceless words were trying to say across the gulf, "sometimes you would take me on your lap—when no one else was around. No one is around now. Can't I come to you again? You were almost crying when you put me on that train. Must I go away again?"

She tried to reason with herself, tell herself this was just her own panic. But she could not persuade herself. Now she knew separateness. It was a loneliness such as she had never known could be. There he sat, and she did not know how to reach him, and she was frozen too and could not try. Never before had she really understood—We live alone. It plumbed the depth of the loneliness of the human soul. All she had thought of—"Hello,

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Father, I thought I'd come and see you,"—little words she had hoped would mean welcome, she could no more move across the green grass and say them than she could move one star nearer another. They were near enough he could have heard her voice had she called out to him, and they were as far as if she were on one star and he another. There he sat, and her longing to go up and say little friendly things was a longing for the unattainable. He dwelt apart and he dwelt alone. He might hear her words but she would not reach him. He did not look lonely the way you are lonely between times—when you know you are going to be again with people. He had left. She believed that now. She could no more reach him than she could reach her mother in her grave.

Yet he was not in his grave. He lived a life. He was living it now. She could not touch that life, and this was more lonely than the grave.

She was so afraid of this vast loneliness that she tried to pit her little self against it. Sought for strength to *try*—to try and fail. That was our human life. That was a world she knew—with failure she was acquainted, and it would take her back into the world of all who tried and failed, not leave her in *this*—this bleak vast knowing there is nothing we can do.

But something was dying in her: a faith in which she had always lived; the faith we could reach one another—that dear faith that out of the loneliness that is each



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one of us we can reach the loneliness of another. We touch there—in our common loneliness she would have thought, and that may be our closest touch. That was something given us in grace.

And thinking how this had been given her in grace she tried again—for her own faith, if only that would support her now she could walk that little way—and fail, fail humanly, and know that to try is something by which we live. “But, Father—we are living on the earth at the same time; my feet are resting on the good green earth on which yours rest. The birds are speaking to one another. The bee is going from flower to flower. That click over there is a mowing machine. Together we know that sound. And hear? A dog is barking. These are little dear familiar things. This is Tuesday the tenth of August. We both know weeks and months. So many things you know I know. Then, Father—please.”

But she knew. How she could not possibly have said. Knew she could not reach.

Weak with sorrow and a stark wonder at what she had come to know—something inexorable revealed to her—she crept away.

Chapter XIX

HE reached home that night, but on the homeward trip she did not drive herself.

When she went out the gate, with no backward look at her father, and got in the car, she said to herself, "I'll have to back." For she couldn't go ahead into the driveway, circle the man who sat on a bench under the tree—drive past him, and away from him. With effort putting her mind on what she had to do she backed to an opening in the field where she could turn.

She made the mile or two into town, then knew she could not drive home. She couldn't drive back over the road she had traveled that morning. She would see the same things—and everything was different now. There had been trepidation as the miles lessened between her and her father, but she came on her way believing, or at any rate hoping. She had faith then, warmth to sustain her.

Now she wasn't even capable of driving. Her mind wouldn't turn quickly from one thing to another. She scarcely knew what the car was about—didn't connect with it. No, she couldn't drive ninety-three miles.

But what to do. Phone Warren? She didn't want to

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wait *here*—so near. Wouldn't want to talk to Warren when he came.

Ahead was a garage. She turned in there and inquired whether she could get a man to drive her home. She was not well, she said.

"How far is it?"

"Ninety-three miles."

He whistled. There was no one there could leave. He didn't know who he could get.

"Do you know Warren Chippman?"

"Oh—sure. We know Mr. Chippman."

"He's my brother."

Then it was arranged. So Warren got her home, after all.

She sat on the back seat and didn't look out for a long time. Then she found she was sitting just as her father had. She shifted, moving nearer the window. "That's a crabapple tree," she said to herself. Her mind had to work. She'd *make* it work. "Those are nice cows," she said to the driver.

"Oh, sure. The cows are all right. If some of the people were as good as the cows—"

"What's the matter with the people?" she laughed, for anything—anything at all. She must know *other* things—not just this thing she had come to know. Yes, we could leave life before we died. Yes—loneliness is not being able to reach loneliness. We live alone—yes. "I always liked a red barn best," she said to the driver.

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So, even going back over the way she had come believing, she made her little effort, pitted herself—so trivially—against the cold.

As the next days went by, filled with the things that made her days—the children, house, puppy, donkey, vegetable garden, she was grateful to the things she had to do. "A person just has to keep going," Addie sometimes said. Yes, keep going. Going where—why—we are too occupied to ask, and that perhaps was merciful. Keep occupied in order not to know.

But it was there all the while, unrelenting truth at which she had looked when she looked at her father. She had grieved when she thought he was dead. But that was different. Death we have come to accept, and there can be warmth in grief. It was this *cold*—knowing so far we can go and no farther. No, your love is not enough. No, you cannot help. No, the warmth of your heart is not wanted. Koula cut her finger and she could do something about that—stop the blood and the tears. But there were vast silent places into which we cannot go with our love and good-will.

She didn't care about driving the car now; she had been eager to learn because the car was going to take her to her father. It had been a friend then—an ally. Now it spoke for her failure.

But the children had no such feeling. They wanted rides. When she got back from her trip alone she was going to take *them*, they reminded. So of course she

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had to. If children wanted rides they had to have rides.

One day they drove in to take Ivy a fresh salad from their garden.

"What are you going to do about the children's clothes, Lydia?" Ivy asked as they had tea.

"Their clothes? Aren't they all right?" She looked anxiously at her two out on the lawn with Harriett.

"Of course," Ivy laughed, "for now. But you aren't used to outfitting children for school, are you?"

"I've never done it."

"Well, it's very important. And for Diego and Koula especially so. You know as well as I do they are going to seem strange at first. Children can be cruel little beasts. So their clothes must be just right. And to be right they must be just like the others. It's terribly important. You'd better let me go shopping with you."

They had this expedition. She knew Ivy was right and humbly got things her sister-in-law assured her were what children wore to school.

All over the country women were in stores or at sewing-machines this month getting their children ready for school. She was one of a large company.

She liked being of this company, but she had problems and fears that were her own. How would Diego and Koula get along in school? As Ivy said, they would seem strange. All the children would know they were foreigners. Would they take this out on them—jibe or exclude

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them at recess? Children were conservative. Anyone who was different was wrong.

She couldn't help them here. Now they would have to go away from her and make their own way. If they were jeered at or met hostile stares she wouldn't be there to try and make it right. She would be at home—hoping they were all right. And when they came home would they hide hurts, letting them live there for the rest of their lives? Hurts of childhood live on; in one form or other they are there to the end.

She wished they didn't have to start in this year, but that itself would seem strange and they wouldn't like it. The children they'd known through the summer were going to school. They wanted to go too. And so they'd have to take it. Shielding isn't always kindness.

Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad. Koula was an eager, a friendly and companionable little girl. Diego's reserve had a distinction even children might feel. He could do things other boys couldn't—carve expertly with his knife, throw far and accurately, run fast and jump high. Koula's English was not bad now and Diego had learned fast. She had taken pains with this, and they had picked up a handy lot of colloquial words from other children. Their talk wasn't too literate, not all from teacher and the book.

Yet she could not but yearn over them and suffer in the hurts they might have to take. "If only I could take

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it," she would think, and there was that loneliness again, because she couldn't reach. They have love to come home to, she would think. That will help.

They were excited about the bus. They had to walk about a quarter of a mile and then it would come along for them. "A bus! Just for us!" Koula would cry. But there would be so many new children. She wished it were still the little neighborhood school-house where she had gone, where Hertha, her own first day, had walked through the birches. But they were going to school in town—so many eyes to stare.

One afternoon she was out under the elm tree, shortening a red and blue gingham dress they had bought for Koula, when she saw Warren drive in. "Hi there!" he called. "Just thought I'd look in on you."

But as they chatted of inconsequential things she knew he had come to say something in particular.

At last it came. "So you went to see Father."

She nodded, head bent over her work.

"Won't take anybody else's advice, will you?" He said it good-humoredly enough.

"I couldn't—about that."

"Why couldn't you drive home?" he demanded.

"How did you know I didn't?"

"Oh—things get around. I know all these garage fellows. Tony Abel was down to see about a car."

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"Was the visit too much for you?" he went on, more gently, as she still bent to her work.

"Yes, I—couldn't drive home."

"How did Father seem?"

"I— It's hard to say."

"Yes," he agreed.

"Well—how was it? What did he say?" he pursued, after having waited for her long enough.

"He didn't say anything."

"I know; he doesn't talk much."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Lydia, loosen up a little!" he cried impatiently, as she still kept silence. "He must have said *something*."

"I didn't even hear his voice," she said tremulously.

"*What?* Why—you mean they wouldn't let you see him?"

"No, I saw him. Oh—I *saw* him," she said.

Her fingers trembled with her needle and she did not go on with the sewing, nor did she speak, but sat there bent over the dress as if still working with it.

"Well, all *right*," Warren said at last. "Of course if you don't *want* to tell me—"

How could she tell him? How tell why she did not cross that little stretch of green and speak to her father? Who would believe she couldn't do that? What words were there for it?

But Warren was offended—so she tried. "I went in

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through the gate. He was sitting there—on a bench under the maple tree. I—I had to wait a minute. Well, I waited. He never moved. So I couldn't."

She looked up as if asking him to understand. "But he didn't know you were there, did he?" Warren asked reasonably.

"No, he didn't see me. He was thinking." She looked puzzled. "It wasn't *thinking*," she murmured.

She could feel her brother staring at her. "You aren't trying to tell me," he asked slowly, "that after going all that way you never even went up and spoke to him?"

"No—I couldn't." She turned on him passionately. "Couldn't—I tell you! Can't you understand I *couldn't*?"

Her eyes were blazing and then they were wet.

"Well—" Warren at last said helplessly; "that's about the strangest thing yet."

She pressed the little dress against her eyes. "Yes—it was strange."

She would never be able to do any better than this—never able to tell anyone. It was only that she knew—had come to know. She didn't herself know how she knew—so how could she make it clear to another?

She thought of this and Warren watched her thinking. He must have felt a little of what was there, for gently he said: "I'm sorry, Lydia,"—and didn't even say, "You shouldn't have gone."

She got buttermilk and cookies. Men were working

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up on the hill. "Someone is going to be buried," Warren observed.

The children were up there watching. "We used to do that," she said.

"There's Bill Morris," Warren remarked between cookie bites. "He's sexton now. His old man had the job when we were kids. Remember how he used to chase us away?"

She nodded. They used to dig graves then and they dug them now. That was one thing went on. Before very many days men would dig a grave up there for her father.

"Warren," she asked, "what did Father say when he knew I had come home?"

Warren brushed off crumbs, kept busy with this after the crumbs were all gone. "Why, Lydia," he had to say at last, "I don't believe he knows you are home."

She put her glass down on the low table. She had almost dropped it.

"You never even told him—" She couldn't go on.

"Now, Lydia—*please*. You saw Father. You must have felt— Why you didn't even go over and speak to him. You must have got the idea. He just doesn't care about things now. I thought of writing, but I didn't want to disturb him."

"Disturb him?" she repeated incredulously.

"Well," he reminded, "did you want to disturb him?"



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"No, but—" Her father didn't even know that she was home!

"But he asked me to come home," she said. Warren did not reply.

With heartache she wondered—would she never come to the end of it, of what she hadn't known? She hadn't known her father still lived. Hadn't known her mother was brought up in this house. And now—her father didn't know she was home; she had taken it for granted he knew. Somehow this terribly hurt her feelings—homecoming had meant so much to her, and he hadn't even known!

She took up the little dress she had been shortening for Koula; shook it out, folded and laid it on her lap, her hands resting on it. Dress a little girl would wear her first day at school. That was a beginning. And up there on the hill was an ending. The men digging the grave had paused in their work and they looked very tall against the sky. Life began and it ended, and between were days we had together.

"Warren," she asked, "when you see Father—sometimes you see him—doesn't he ever speak of the days in this house? Days when we were little and went to school? You know. The days when we were all under this roof together?"

He shook his head. "Well—once," he said after considering.

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"He did—once?"

"Spoke of the house. He wanted to know if he could come back here—for just one day."

"He *did*?" Then he must think about it, and suddenly the little dress was friendly on her lap and the men on the hill didn't loom so tall.

"And what did you do about it?" she asked.

"There wasn't anything I could do about it."

"You mean he *couldn't* come home—for just one day?"

"Why, no. You know the situation, Lydia. He was committed. He's still under the law. He's very fortunate to have as much freedom as he does, but certainly he can't leave there."

The law—yes. But one day! Want to come home—for just one day—and not allowed his day! Only one day he asked—before men on that hill dug the grave where he would lie forever. "I have every day here," she thought. "He asked but one."

"It surprised me," Warren said. "I couldn't think why he wanted to come back—for just one day. I wondered if there was something here he wanted to get. I told him I'd send him anything he wanted."

Then the children came running down the hill, with news the grave was all finished now. Koula saw her dress and lost interest in the grave. She showed it to her Uncle Warren. "See?" she said proudly. "This is a pocket. You can't see it unless you know it's there!"

Chapter XX

LYDIA woke next morning in the feeling, Perhaps I don't want anything new to happen. It was early and the day was fresh. Perhaps I just want to live in the days as they come, and not know any more than I know now. (Not an ambitious wish, she smiled to herself.)

Each day had itself to offer. Too often we let it go by scarcely tasting of it. The sun today wasn't just as it was yesterday, nor were the herbs she could see out there in the kitchen garden. Diego and Koula had yesterday's experience behind them and that made them different, and tomorrow they would not be as they were today. Nor would she.

Days got lost in other days. We gave them to worry about yesterday, or buried them in fretting over tomorrow. This day will never be again, she thought as she woke into it.

Why did she have this need to understand days that were gone? So much was dark around her. She had a feeling—We can come into the light, if we only know how. The light is not far away, she would think. It is there for us, or we would not feel it near.

It wasn't facts she sought—only facts in-so-far as they

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could open into the feeling that had caused them to be. The facts of another's life do not illumine. Only when we know the heart can we know that life. Only the feeling that made the days can light them. To understand would release her, she had thought, and she could then meet the days still there for her—living, not with part of herself, but whole.

But as facts came to her—so rudely most of them, surprising her in unprotected moments—they seemed to leave her the more bewildered. Only from her mother's letters—from Hertha's heart—had there come new strength for the day that is today, the waiting day we call tomorrow.

To know in part is tormenting. When we know more fully, is there healing—no matter what we may come to know? Strength diminishes when it seems we are spending it in vain. If she could be assured she would come through to a place where she would say: Now I know. I can see why it had to be. I am cleansed of misgiving and pain because I understand—promise of that goal would give fortitude for anything a day might bring.

But if she could never put it together? If the parts did not fall into place, but each separate one was there with its own hurt . . . Then it would have been folly to try to understand. Were we not meant to know, but only to live the days as they came? But whence came this urge to understand, she thought again. That too was of

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life—as well as tall grasses blowing on the hill, as well as the voice of Diego, letting Pancho out into the good new day.

It is Pancho's day and it is mine too, she thought. I will not bury it while it is here.

And then it came to her why she was thinking thus of days. Her father wanted the gift of one day. He asked one day in his old home. Here where he had lived with Hertha and reared his children, where he had been born and known his own boyhood, he asked that from the days remaining for him he have one day here.

It seemed so little. It was denied him.

She wished she could give him one of her days. So happy she would be to make him any gift she could; and what he asked she could not give him.

What would he do with his day? Would he want to be alone here? Then they would all go away. Would he wander about as he had with the young girl Hertha? Would he look upon all the things he had known, to have them with him after he would not see them again? What day of his life would he like to relive here? The happiest day he had known? The day he said that last good-by to the wife he loved more dearly than his own life?

Or was it as Warren surmised—something left here he wanted to find, something he could not ask anyone to get for him. What would that be? Something of Her-

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tha's? Did he know of the little keepsakes in the trunk? Did he want to hold in his hand the letters in which she had poured out her heart to her brother? Had he too, one lonely day, come upon those letters, read them, then reverently tied the blue ribbon and put them back where she had left them? That love and heartache of long ago—that living part of her—did he grieve that it should be left here as if abandoned, and want to hold and guard as long as he could hold and guard? Did he fear someone else would one day come upon them and read not understanding and not cherishing? "But it wasn't like that," her mind tried to tell him; "they were read with love and many tears."

She seemed to have told her father good-by for all her life when she softly closed that white gate behind her. She left him because from a source unquestionable had come the revelation this was what had to be.

She had thought him immured, inviolable, beyond wanting and beyond being reached. It was with submission and in awe she had turned away.

But he *wanted* something. He asked the gift of one day. To ask is human; when we ask of another we have not left others. One day he asked. He wanted one day to be *different*. It almost gave one permission to reach into his days. To want one day more in one's old home—a lonely thing, and wistful. And when we are lonely—wistful—we have *not* left all behind.

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So human to want something. And what he wanted *she* had wanted. Oh, many days she had wished she might have that very day in her old home. This longing they both had known seemed to open a way between them—and she found herself wondering if there might indeed be a way from her to him.

And then she was shocked to find herself entertaining this idea—a way, from her to him, for so august had seemed the pronouncement that shut her out. A cold final truth had been visited upon her, and now she was trying to find her way in where forces over which she had no sway had decreed she could not go. If she commanded the sun to stand still the sun would not stand still.

She said no to the idea, almost in fear for having let it come, and yet it did not go. She went downstairs, lived this her day not unmindful of its worth, yet all the while thoughts were there: when we ask we still partake of life; to want one more day where your days have been spent—that is lonely and wistful and of the human life we live together.

She thought of her mother's letters, written with little idea they would reach, but out of a need to speak, and with a blind faith that what is in one's heart may find its way. And she thought, Could I write to my father as she wrote her brother? He is as far away—he is farther, and I know even less how to reach.

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When the day was spent and the children in bed, alone in a quiet house she sat down to see if she could write to the father to whom twice she had said a last farewell.

She sat there putting nothing down. With many fears she was considering: Could I write a letter he might like to have? Is there anything I could say might be—just a little—like the day here he cannot have? Would a letter from his daughter seem at all like being home?

When she saw him as she had seen him there across the lawn she could write no word. But when she thought of how he asked one day more in this his home she began:

“Dear Father: I thought you might like to know how things are going here at home. When I learned you had left the place to me of course I came home at once and since then I have been very busy, for naturally there were things to do, but it all looks so fresh and nice now, I think you would be pleased.”

How trivial it sounded, and perhaps it was all wrong. He might not be pleased at all to know she had been making changes in his old home.

She went on: “I have tried to keep it as much as possible as it was, but it did need a freshening up and now—”

Oh, *no*, that was no way to begin the letter.

She tried again. “There are two children in the house now, just as there were when Warren and I were grow-

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ing up. They do so many of the things we did that often it seems to me I am a little girl here again.

"They are my adopted children—Diego, a boy from Mexico, and Koula, a little girl from Greece. They did not have parents or good homes, so I took them, and they are happy here. They are seven and five and in a few weeks are going to school. It makes me think of how we used to go to school, and of many things. It may seem strange to you they are foreigners, but they needed me and I them. They're nice children. I think you would like them.

"They have a puppy Henry Kircher gave them. His name is Hans—from Hans Christian Andersen. I read them the fairy-tales. And we have a donkey we brought from Mexico. I've lived a great deal where there are donkeys, and like them. I brought Pancho because I wanted to be sure one donkey had a good life.

"You remember Addie Lewis, don't you? She comes in and helps me. She's been so good. Of course Warren and Ivy come out, and Henry Kircher is a good neighbor. He sprayed the trees for me.

"I just thought you might like to know.

"I'd like to come and see you, Father, if you'd care to have me. I needn't tell you how much I think about you, and Mother, now that I am back. Though I did while I was away, too.

"As soon as I learned you had left the place to me I

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started home. I've been very busy, for it had to be opened and freshened up. You know how it is when houses are closed. Some plaster had fallen—things like that. It all looks so nice and fresh now. I do believe—”

She stopped. She had been going to say, “I do believe you would like it.” And how could she say that, for it suggested he might see it, and he wasn't to see it.

She read what she had written. It sounded like prattle. He will think I do not care, she thought. From this he will not know I ever cared. It fell so far short—outraged what was in her heart.

She thought of Hertha's words—“Now it seems I am not going to see you again. Am not going to find you.”

“Maybe it is foolish to write to you when I do not know where to send what I write,” Hertha had written. And Hertha's daughter did not know where to send what she wrote, she did not know to what place in his heart she could send her words. But—“When I write to you I kind of forget I can't send it to you, so then it's as if you were—well, somewhere.”

Yes.

“They said we were to live our own lives,” Hertha wrote her brother Joe, “said a person had to forget the past. But how *can* you? You didn't forget, did you—about how we used to sit around and eat our supper?”

You didn't, did you?

“In my heart I'll never say good-by,” Hertha wrote.

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And Lydia wrote now, she too sending it she knew not where: "This isn't what I'd like to write, Father. What I want to say is that I've always loved you and Mother and home. All the years I was away I thought of you. I wanted to come home, but it seemed I shouldn't. I know there must have been a reason, so that is all right. There is so much we do not understand, but we can love whether we understand or not.

"So I just want you to know that I always loved you.

"You'll never know what it meant to me—your leaving me the place if I would make it my home. That seemed to say, 'Come home, Lydia,' and I came—so gladly.

"Now there is life here again—young happy life—and I hope you are glad.

"Father, could I come and see you? I want that more than I want anything else.

"Your loving daughter,

"Lydia."

She bent over her letter, swaying a little back and forth. Still so meager it was, but it dared so much. What was she doing? She could not tell. With all her courage she folded, sealed and addressed the letter. That seemed to make it his. "If I have done wrong, forgive me," she said to invisible powers. She was weak, for she seemed to have laid hands on life itself. "We do not know," she thought. "We are children who need to be told."

Chapter XXI

THE following day she drove into town and mailed her letter at the post office.

She walked swiftly to the slot marked Letters, but after she had dropped her own she stood looking at the place where it had disappeared, not moving until someone behind her said, "Pardon me."

It was done now. She could not get it back. It was of the irrevocable now.

She was going to see Mary about the children's party. "I am a children's party expert," Mary had assured her.

She didn't want to go just then. While she was talking ice-cream and favors her mind would be following the letter. "Now they've seen it at the post office," she'd be thinking. "It's been sorted. It doesn't look any different from other letters. They aren't wondering whether it's right to send it."

Impatiently she tossed her head as if to shake something out of her mind. Of course she would go and see Mary. Only three days till the party and the children talked of nothing but games they would play, what *kind* of a cake would it be. Just as well she had to think of grab-bags and paper hats. The letter was on its way—better or worse.

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The party was for Koula's birthday. They were asking the children they knew and through Ivy and Mary she was inviting others from town. Mary had a station-wagon and would pile them in.

"I want them to get used to more children before they start school," she explained to Mary and her mother. "I thought it might—take the edge off."

"Don't you worry about the children at school," Mary's mother assured her. "They'll all be thick as thieves before the week's over."

"I hope so," laughed Lydia.

They were sitting out on the porch where they had been the day she dismayed them when they saw how little she knew about her mother. She knew more now. That day she had been stricken with humiliation, powerless in it, and now there was pride in things she knew. She wished she could tell Mother's old school friend why Hertha had been "to herself"; then she would understand why her friendship was not met half way. But she couldn't—not today; she must think of birthday candles and paper streamers, not things that would lead back to her letter.

She and Mary went to the five-and-ten and bought frogs and mice and dwarfs that bobbed up out of a box. They laughed a good deal as they made them work.

Next day, preparing some candied fruit as she remem-

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bered from Smyrna, she was thinking, This will be new to the children, and also thinking, He has it now.

Her mind made pictures while she worked. He was coming from breakfast and a man stopped him and said, "Here's a letter for you, Mr. Chippman," said it in cheerful surprise, for it had been a long time since he had a letter.

He took it doubtfully. "Mr. John Chippman." Yes, that was his name. He stood peering at the writing. Would he recognize it? Years since he had seen that writing. She hadn't put her name on the envelope; if he didn't want a letter from her he might not open it, but after he began to read he might go on, be glad to have a letter from his daughter.

He took it outside, walking slowly. She believed he walked very slowly now. He sat down—perhaps on that bench under the maple tree—though she hoped not, and sat there a moment before he slit the envelope. He read, "Dear Father"—and knew it was from her.

Did his face grow a little warmer as he thought, Why, it's from Lydia. Did he slowly read it through and then, holding it, sit there thinking of her? Did he remember how she looked and what she used to say? Was he glad to hear from his daughter Lydia? Did he think: It's been a long time. I'm glad she's all right. Hope she hasn't fixed the place up too much, it was all right the way it was. Funny about those children. Funny names—Diego,

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Koula. Well, I suppose they're company for her, he might think, and then did he sit there seeing these new children do all the "darn fool things" she and Warren used to do. Could he hear himself calling, "Stop that, you children!" or, "Supper's ready now—if anybody wants to eat." Did old days come to life so he would remember many little long ago things he thought he had forgotten, and were remembered childish voices company for him?

Or did he tear her letter up and with just a little frown return to what claimed him?

She could not know. Perhaps she would never know. She hadn't much hope he would answer her letter. She didn't believe he wrote letters now. But it just might be he'd say to someone, "Would you write my son and tell him I'd like my daughter to come and see me."

It *might* be.

"It mustn't rain! Rain—don't rain!" Koula kept crying and her prayers were answered. Children never had a better day for their party. "Happy birthday! Happy birthday! Happy birthday *to* you!" they danced around Koula, until the child well-nigh burst with joy.

The games went at lively pace, but it was Pancho made it what one tot of six pronounced, "The very best birthday party I went to in *all my life*." At first the children from town looked askance at the donkey, but after they'd watched neighborhood children riding they began to

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cry, "Let me! Now it's *my* turn." Two or three would be on him at once and Pancho, wearing a huge collar of grasses and flowers, stepped obligingly around.

Lydia joined Ivy and Mary, who were sitting on the sidelines for a moment. "That's right, get your breath," laughed Mary. "And stop worrying. This is a Grade A party."

"It does seem to be going well," Lydia said happily.

"And I don't think we have to worry at all," said Ivy, "about Diego and Koula in school. They're just hand in glove with these children now."

"There are going to be some harassed households tonight," laughed Mary. "Every child is going home and say, 'Why can't *we* have a donkey?'"

Addie's husband drove in, smilingly watched the children a moment, then came over to her. "Stopped at the box for your mail. Couple of letters." He handed them to Lydia with a laughing, "This makes me feel like a kid myself. My, they look pretty—all playing together like that."

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world," agreed Mary.

"These paint people are never going to stop sending circulars," said Lydia. Then she glanced at her other letter. It was from her father.

Mary and Ivy went on talking. Lydia sat looking at her letter. "Yes, it's wonderful what Lydia's done with

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the place," Ivy was saying. "I do think, Lydia— Why, my dear—what's the matter? You're white as a sheet!"

"She's tired," said Mary. "She's done so much for the party."

"But, Lydia,—you *are* white," Ivy insisted.

"Nonsense," she managed to laugh. "How could I be white?" Steady now. Hold steady. "I think it's time for the ice-cream," she said.

Time for the ice-cream. The big moment. Can't spoil the party. Couldn't read the letter now. It was there in her pocket—the letter from her father.

She served the ice-cream. Koula blew the candles and cut one slice of cake. Lydia finished cutting the cake. No, her hands didn't shake. Mustn't spoil the party.

They had brought out tables and the children were eating under the elm. Warren arrived, and Henry Kircher wandered over to "see the fracas."

Lydia got some ice-cream for the grown-ups. They were merry too, in the spirit of the party. Must keep in the spirit of the party. Her left hand pressed her jacket pocket. It was there, waiting for her—the letter from her father.

He had written so quickly, almost at once. Then he must have been glad to have her letter. She could snatch a moment now, run in the house and read his letter. No, she couldn't read it that way, a moment snatched, right back to the party. It was too much for that.

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She and Warren were standing together. "I never knew it was such a swell place for a party," he said. "You're a wizard, aren't you, Lydia?"

"Is that a good thing to be?" she laughed.

"Damned if you haven't made the place *gay*. People are *happy* here." He said it marveling it could be true.

She slipped her hand in her pocket, touched the letter her father had sent her. When she answered she'd tell him about the party. People were *gay* here, Warren said. Yes, that was a happy group of children. Shouts of laughter after years of silence.

Mary and Ivy began gathering up the children who would go back to town. There were protests and delays, none of them wanted to leave. "It's so *nice* here," they would say. "We like it here," they'd say. "Will you have another party next birthday?" they asked Koula.

Then the shouting and the waving of good-bys.

"There goes a happy bunch of kids," said Henry.

A few of the neighborhood children remained. Addie was clearing up. Henry said he'd be over the hill now.

She walked a little way with him. She could read her letter now. She wanted it so much she was weak before it and had to delay the moment while she walked and talked with Henry.

She left him at the cemetery fence, walked a little way alongside the fence and there sat down. Down at the house Diego was turning hand-springs and Koula was

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looking at all her presents. Addie was bustling around.

With hands that were cold and not steady she opened her letter. She read:

"Dear Lydia: You shouldn't have come back. I never expected you would and I thought you'd understand that. I don't see why you didn't understand and why you're making this trouble now."

"Why—there's some mistake," she gasped. "*This isn't—*"

But she read on: "I meant the place to be for the cemetery. I don't see why Warren ever let you stay.

"I didn't want things done to the house. I wanted it torn down as it was. You had no business to go there at all. You know well enough what I meant—why I left it to you the way I did. You shouldn't have taken advantage."

You shouldn't have taken advantage.

If one of the laughing children down at the party had suddenly been slapped right in the face . . .

"I don't want strangers there—those strange children prowling around. So go away now.

"I note what you say about coming to see me and all that. Now, Lydia, what is the use pretending you don't understand. You know very well I am not your father."

The graven stones in the cemetery behind her were not more graven than Lydia as she sat there now. The dead in their graves were scarce less motionless.

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A long time and then she continued: "You're making it very hard for me, opening it all up like this; but one thing I've got to say. It was not Hertha's fault. About my not being your father or anything else—it was not her fault. It wasn't Hertha didn't want you to stay at home. It was me, and I should think you could understand that. I didn't want you there on account of your not being my child. Now that's easy to understand. If you don't understand it it's because you don't want to. I didn't want your mother to pay attention to you, or be loving with you, and that's the reason it was the way it was between her and you. I wouldn't let it be any other way. I want to say again that nothing about it was her fault. And after while I couldn't stand it to have you there and she had to do what I said and you were sent away.

"You should have known before. Well, you know now, if you didn't before—and I think you did.

"I'm sorry you've been put to the expense, but that is your own fault. You've been away a long time and must know lots of places to go.

"None of it was your mother's fault. Now you remember that."

The letter was signed John Chippman.

Chapter XXII

SHE went to the closet, got out one of her suit-cases and began putting things in it.

A long time she had been sitting in her room. She couldn't do that; she had things to do at once. She had no right to stay here. She'd have to get away just as soon as she could.

Here was some underwear. Where were her—? Oh, just put in anything—anyway at all. Put them in and get away. She wasn't going to "take advantage."

She ought to go tonight. But the children were asleep, tired after their party. How could she wake them up and say, "We're leaving now." And where would she take them?

Well, do *something*. Start to get ready. Get away before they begin tearing down the house. They might come any time now. She'd have to be away before that, didn't want to see it. She got down some of her dresses and put them in a bag, not looking to see what they were or how she packed them.

There was a tapping at her door and a little voice crooned, "*Moth-er*."

Oh, not tonight! Please God, not tonight!

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But she opened the door and said, "Why Koula Chipman—" Then pulled up short, thinking, But that isn't your name. It isn't even mine.

"Now, darling, you know you should be in bed."

"What you doing?" Koula asked.

"Just—rearranging my things. Now you must—"

Oh, what would she do with her—what could she say to her—to Diego. They'd been homeless—they'd been wanderers. She'd made them believe this was their home. With all their childish trust they believed it was home. They felt as secure as any child at the party that afternoon. But they must suffer for her stupidness. Suffer for a vindictive old man's heartlessness.

She was weak and sat down; Koula came up on her lap and cuddled there. "Oh little girl, not tonight," she cried within her. "My strength is gone. Not tonight."

But she was stroking Koula's hair and Koula was saying, "You know that girl with the curls—Louise?"

"Yes."

"She says she likes me! She wants me to be her *very best friend*."

"How nice," she could say.

"And you know what?" Koula raised up in excitement. "We're going to be in the same room at school! We're going to the same school and we'll be in the same room, and she says—Louise says—we'll ask the teacher to let us sit together!"

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"Well! She does like you," Lydia said. "People will always like you, Koula. Even when you go other places and—"

"And we'll play together at recess!" Koula cried.

But you won't—she didn't say. She held the little girl close, because of the disappointment she was going to bring her, and something grew fierce in her and said: "I'll protect you as long as I live—you and Diego!" Let me take the hurts for them. Oh God grant me that!

"It's next week we start to school," Koula mumbled sleepily.

The next day Lydia knew she would have to manage a little better. She couldn't just throw things in bags and run away. Nor would they come and tear the house down before the children's eyes. Because, she told herself in a hard way quite new to her, I won't let them. It's my house. Whatever he says he meant by it he left it to me and it will not be torn down till I say so!

God knows she didn't want to stay any longer than she had to. But she'd get away decently—she wouldn't upset the children any more than she could help. "I don't want those strange children prowling around," he said in the foulest letter a man ever wrote.

Well, you'll have them prowling around here—as long as I say! And you needn't worry. It won't be long. We don't want to stay here.

We will find some happier place, she told herself.

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There is a curse on this place. We will leave it and forget it.

It was hard to do much packing and not have Addie know what she was about. Then she would have to tell her, I am going away. She couldn't tell anyone that, for what reason would she give? Couldn't say, I have been mistaken all the time. The man I thought was my father isn't my father, and he tells me to get right out of here now. She couldn't even tell Warren that. She wouldn't be able to bear their sympathy. It would involve talking about too many other things. She would never be able to tell anyone.

But what *could* she say? Just lightly say, Wandering seems to have gone into my blood? Now I want to go somewhere else?

They wouldn't believe her. They had come to know her too well for that. They knew how happy she had been working on the house, knew her deep satisfaction in being home and her plans for the children. They had shared too much with her to believe she would suddenly want to let it all go.

No, she couldn't say good-by to them; you can't say good-by when you can't tell why it is good-by. In just a day or two, as soon as she could get hold of herself and know what she was doing, she would put the children in the car and drive away. The friends she drove away and left would be disappointed in her, and would they finally

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come to say, "Well, guess we didn't understand Lydia, after all. She must be rather crazy—doing all that and then running away and leaving it. She couldn't have meant it—about being happy to be home."

She had come to love them—closely, gratefully; she didn't want to hurt them and she didn't want to lose them. But she couldn't tell them how she had been cast out. And she was different now—she would be different with them. Her deep urge to be one with them—Die down, die down, she said to that in her had needed them. If you beat Pancho till all the life was taken out of him—he wouldn't be the same. Us too—yes; we can be beaten down, want only to crawl away where none can see our hurt.

She would have to go through a few days more of pretending to be the same, simulate with Addie, with anyone who might come. We can *act* alive. We know the tones of voice and motions of the hand.

But one thing she would have to face—the children. She had built it all up for them—that this was their home. She had succeeded all too well. They were confident and happy. They had friends. They had taken root.

She herself would never take root again. It hurt too much—torn from the roots. But children were adaptable, she tried to assure herself, and they need never know how wantonly this had been done to them. She must manage so they would not the rest of their lives feel de-

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frauded of their right. She knew too well what that can do to a child. There must be a home again. But *where*—and where in her was the spirit to make another home? Would they feel that lack in her—that it was all effort now—and be less secure, less at home in life?

She would talk about a trip. They were just going to get in the car and take a trip. “But we’ll be back in time for school?” they would ask.

And how answer that? She might say schools were better somewhere else. Ah, but they wanted *this* school now, the school she had been making them ready for and which they had taken on as their school. Koula would grieve for the little girl with curls—Louise—who wanted to be her “very best friend.”

Again and again they would say to her, “Why don’t we go home?” She had said that to herself for years. She was letting befall them what had befallen her—the very thing she had pledged not to do! It had been her support and her recompense—that the sorrow she had known would never be theirs. Proudly—happily—she had pledged herself to this. And now . . . They would be homesick too. “Why can’t we go home now?”—she could hear them asking it—wistful, bewildered.

She couldn’t say to them—that place was *evil*.

It wasn’t evil because Father wasn’t really her father. If he had told her wanting it not to hurt, it wouldn’t

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have hurt much. "Why, never mind, Father," she would have said. "I feel just the same."

But she had lost her father now. If he were dead she wouldn't have lost him. If he had left life the way she thought when she looked at him across the little stretch of grass—then he would have gone away from her, but he would still be the father she used to have. But the man who could write that letter wasn't the father she thought she had had. He had wanted to destroy her. It destroyed everything—the days he used to take her on his lap and when he had bound up her hurts. He said he had never cared for her—had never wanted her there. He answered a loving letter with a ruthless blow. That took away the father she thought she had had.

And the place wasn't evil because Mother had been untrue to Father. "Why, I know those things happen," she would have said, and loved her mother just the same. "You were too beautiful. You were too much desired, and in some moment—yes, I understand," she would have said.

But Mother ceased to be Mother almost as much as her father was no longer Father. For how could you cherish memory of a woman who would turn from her own child at command of any man? She had thought it was something much deeper than that, something her mother could not help—way down in the things we do not control. What it was she had not known and it had always

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bewildered her, but her love did not go, because she always thought, It is something I do not understand. If I knew I would accept—and so she accepted without knowing. We take things on faith; it is when faith goes we have them no longer.

She could have borne anything she had been told in love.

As she went about the house, in a furtive way gathering things together, she thought, I've been so blind; so stupid. She had wanted the past to open to her as a book in which she could read and learn truth, but it was as if she refused to look at pages there to turn to. Why had she never suspected Father was not her father? She could see now there were things should have told her. Things Warren said the night he told her their father wasn't dead. What was that he had said when she asked, "Why did Father leave the place to me if he didn't think I would come home?" What was in his mind, she had asked, and Warren replied, "Perhaps he was still protecting Mother." That was a key she hadn't turned.

But I didn't *expect* that, she thought. I never dreamed of such a thing. And just so she had passed other things by—things that might have told her: hesitations, embarrassments she encountered in people. She well knew there was something strange about the Chippmans. Why had she never thought of *this*? I wanted to know the truth and yet I seem to have been born without

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suspicion, she thought bitterly now. A little suspicion would have opened my eyes. Stupidly accepting. Always believing there was a reason when those I loved turned from me. Believing good must be underneath, not seeing what was there.

Too much trust, she thought. It made me stupid.

Well, that trusting self was gone. Failure could be no more complete than hers in coming home. She went away with far less than she brought. Maybe sometime she could laugh about it—how blind she had been. With fervor and love she came home to understand—so she could live. Now she went away again—without the faith and loyalty nothing else had shaken. Once more she went out into the world, and this time stripped of what had been herself. That trusting self she buried here. “Call it gullible,” she thought, “and there will be fewer tears in leaving it.”

About Mother too—she tried to stop thinking but couldn’t—I never thought of *that*. In all my bewilderment about her the one thing I never suspected was the truth that was there to see. Her beauty—rich luscious physical beauty—the way her lips would part, the slow way her eyes would close. Made for loving. I’ve been around a world where people make love and never thought—made for loving. Not in *that* way I didn’t think of it. And how could I, for Mother lived in this house, in a lonely place, in a world that shut out that kind of

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loving. Opportunity. There has to be opportunity for love outside. Such a life as I've lived—plenty of opportunity there. But Mother's life in this house?

But people had told her about her mother. Told it in a subject changed, in looks that shifted. Why, two men had told her! Two men who remembered her beauty. Mr. Blake in Italy, Judge Kircher here. Their faces changed when they spoke of her; their voices were rich with remembered things. They were old men. She had thought they were remembering a beautiful woman, grateful to her for having been more beautiful than any other. But they had been young men—young men desiring. Perhaps it was not just beauty beheld, perhaps one of them—or perhaps both of them had—

And then for the first time it shot through her mind—
"Who is my father?"

"Miss Chippman!" Addie was calling from the foot of the stairs. "Your brother's out here."

"Oh, no," she said swiftly to herself. "I can't!"

She sat on the bed holding her hands tight. It wasn't till Warren called, "Lydia! You there?" that she went slowly, very carefully, down the stairs.

Chapter XXIII

WARREN was playing ball with Diego. He was good to the children. He liked them now, and they felt their Uncle Warren about belonged to them. They'd miss him.

So would she miss Warren. Now she felt at home with him again. But—who *is* my father? Strange she had not thought of it at once. She hadn't torn herself away from the idea Father was her father. You couldn't do that—all at once. But *somebody* has to be my father, she thought, as she watched Warren and Diego. Everyone has a father. Who is mine?

It didn't seem to matter so very much. Some stranger, perhaps. Someone she'd never seen and never would. She didn't believe Judge Kircher was her father. Nothing in her told her that he was. It seemed she'd know it, if he were. This was all rather ridiculous—wondering who *is* my father. Joseph Blake had given her the money. He was the kind of man would want to provide for his child. He had been gentle and affectionate with her, had seemed to care how things were going to be for her. He had thought of her as a lost child—she knew that. He didn't want her to be lost. She believed he would have said, if it were true, "You're *my* child, Lydia."

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Though perhaps he didn't feel he could say that. Not at liberty to say, "The man you think is your father isn't; I am your father." And he was right—if he felt that, it would have been so great a shock to her then—undermining, hurting. For she loved her father then and thought that he—in his way—loved her. Other things too would hold him back from this truth—if it were truth: keeping faith with Hertha, an old loyalty, a confidence not to be divulged even to claim a child—had he wanted to claim a child. Hertha was in her grave and no word of his was going to threaten the love of her daughter for her. No, he wouldn't risk that—no matter how much he might want it for himself. He was such a gentleman, she thought—what I mean by gentleman. Not just gentle breeding and courtly manner, but consideration for another—gentle, kind, sensitive.

One would be proud to have him for a father, she thought. And he had provided for her, as a father for his child. But that could have been his feeling about Mother, and also his feeling for herself, which she knew he had. I don't look like him, she thought—and not at all like Mother. I must look like my father—something like him. Who *is* he? Some stranger, she thought again. Was he living? Dead? Did it matter?

Warren came over to her, flushed and laughing. "We're going to make that kid a swell ball player," he said. "There's a fine boy, Lydia. You know it?"

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"I know it," she said.

"Well—on to the cellar!" he cried. "I want to have another look. Come on, Diego! We're going to see about the new furnace. It's here now," he told Lydia. "At last."

(Oh, we can't put in a furnace, she should say, and she had a nightmare feeling she was going to laugh, for a furnace is to keep you warm, and who would it keep warm—the graveyard? Don't laugh—*mustn't!* It would go, all control would go if she laughed about the furnace. But she should say, The house is going to be torn down.)

Warren was gaily leading the way.

The new furnace—fine time for it to arrive! They were all ready for it upstairs, all piped. There had been a delay in shipping it. Warren wanted just the right kind.

They stood around in the cellar, for no good reason except that Warren was so interested. "No trick at all to connect it," he said. "It'll sit right here," he told Diego. "It'll keep you warm, my boy. You'll not shiver *this* winter."

He was showing Diego a catalog, explaining it. "They're bringing it out day after tomorrow," he told Lydia.

Day after tomorrow. She'd have to be away by then. She'd leave early that morning. She'd have only tomorrow here. She'd leave word about the furnace—not to put it in. She should tell Warren now. But she couldn't. The only way she could get away was to say nothing

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about it. She'd pretend it was sudden. Some word she had had. What word? Never mind. She'd just take the children, a few things, and go. Other things could be sent after them. She had to do it that way.

Warren wanted to go all over the house, seeing how things were for the furnace, just because he liked thinking of how nice and warm they were going to be.

He talked about the house, approving the things she had done.

"Remember the first day you came out here, Lydia?"

"I remember."

"I felt sorry for you."

"I know you did."

"I didn't think it could be done. Seemed to me the most forlorn undertaking a woman ever started on. I thought you were crazy."

"Maybe I was."

"Not much. Look at it *now*. How did you know, Lydia—that you could do this?" As she did not reply he pursued: "And why did you want to?"

"It—it was just an idea of mine," she managed to say.

"Darn good idea. Why do you know, I *like* coming here now. You may have noticed it," he laughed.

"So does Ivy. And as for those kids here yesterday—That was a great party."

Diego had gone out to play with Addie's boy. She and

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Warren were in the dining-room. She supposed it was the last time they would ever sit there.

He was in fine fettle. Yesterday's party had pleased him. The new furnace pleased him. He was pleased with her.

He lighted cigarettes for them. He was sitting in the chair that had been Father's, comfortably stretched out. He felt like talking.

"And about the children. Why we were perfectly appalled at first." He laughed as if it was good that now he could tell her. "We thought they'd seem so different—so strange here," he explained. "A Greek and a Mexican. We thought *that* was crazy. Oh, we were quite sunk about it." He laughed again, then said: "And now they belong here."

"They do," she said. But they can't stay here, she thought.

If she told him about it he would be all for her staying. "Father can't get out of it like that," he would say. "He did it, and you took him up on it, and now you belong here. Nobody can do anything about it," he would assure her.

Oh, yes, Warren would fight for her now. And for Diego and Koula. "Why you can't take those children away," he would say. Ivy'd say that, and Mary. They would be on her side.

She couldn't talk about it because she would never be

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able to make them understand how impossible it would be to stay. She had come believing she had been asked to come home. The very fact it had meant so much made it impossible to stay after she was told she had no right to it. If she lived here now she would live with the thing that had been done to her. The house had nothing to offer now except thoughts that would destroy her. She would live with cruel words said to her. The past had gone down into a mire. To live in that would be destruction. Better the house pulled down than she.

Only Warren was left of the old days. She wished it were in her power to talk to him. They had played together as children. His love and approval were dear to her. But there are things you can't say even to one near you.

As he was leaving she put her arm through his and walked with him from the house. She wondered if she would ever see him again. She knew she would never come back here.

"Good-by, Warren," she said; and, "So long, my dear," he said.

So long, my dear. . . .

The clock struck four. It was four o'clock, afternoon of the last day she would ever be in that house.

It was hard to pack secretly. When Addie came upstairs as she was taking things from her closet she said

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something about going through her things, getting ready for fall. The children were out playing and hearing their voices she thought, It is the last day they will play here, and they do not know it is the last day. She wouldn't even tell them tonight. They'd ask so many questions, excitedly tell anyone who might happen in. In the morning she would say she had just found she had to go away and so this was a chance for the trip they had talked about. The questions they asked then she'd answer as best she could.

Now she was packing their things—in Koula's room, going into Diego's. They loved their rooms. She folded the clothes that were ready for them to wear to school.

She looked out at them. Diego was trying to make Pancho charge a fort. The fort was the woodshed. Pancho. She had wanted one donkey to have a good life. She had been so sure this was home she had brought him all the way from Mexico. But it wasn't home, and what would she do with Pancho?

At first she would leave him with Addie. I'll pay his way, she thought—I can at least do that. It fell far short of what she had meant. She had watched overburdened donkeys climbing steep streets—she'd seen the blows fall. Their patient eyes said something to her. So one donkey was to know the good life. One of my ideas, she thought rather bitterly now.

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Hans would go with them. She couldn't take Hans too from the children.

Hans made her think of Henry, and how she should go over and say good-by. But she was forgetting—she wasn't saying good-by to anyone. Henry had been kind. She had found kindness here, and she was running away as if it had meant nothing to her. She wouldn't be remembered warmly. They would think, "Well, guess it was too quiet here for Lydia. Seems she didn't know her own mind. She didn't even care enough to say good-by."

"If you could know how much I cared—how grateful I was"—her heart said the words that might never be spoken. It pained her deeply to seem ungrateful to friends who had been kind to her. "I needed you," she thought—"I was *so* grateful." Would there were some way to let it be known our deeds do not always speak for our hearts.

"It looks so nice," she thought, as she wandered through the rooms she would not see tomorrow. She thought of the days she had worked here, working from morning till night getting these rooms ready for comfortable happy living. They were ready now; inviting they looked, evoking good days. Koula loved her little blue-trimmed dressing-table, her ruffled white curtains and blue spread. Diego was proud of his plainer room—the sturdy table at which he could work with tools or drawing-board or books. A few good pictures. This old

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sofa was nice here in the upper hall. She liked that pumpkin-yellow of the floor and the tiny-figured paper on the wall. So much thought had gone into it—much happy thought.

How long did it take to wreck a house? Wreckers worked fast. They didn't have to be careful. They went about it boisterously. "Here she comes!" or, "There she goes!" they would cry. Yes, there she goes. A little wrenching apart and never again would this roof shelter anyone from the rain. It was going to rain tonight; those clouds were getting blacker. One night more this roof would shelter from the rain. She would hear it as when a little girl she used to think, "I'm glad I'm not out in it," and pull the covers closer and snuggle in her bed.

If it began to rain she'd go to the door and call, "Hurry now! Come in quick!"—and they'd come laughing and scampering through the door, and it would close behind them, shutting out the storm; romping inside then, safe. The door of your house . . . It opens to comfort and safety and friendliness. *Inside*—the storms and the world shut out. Those doors would come off now. There'd be no inside here any more.

In her own room she ran her hand along the wall she had painted herself. She had been at such pains to get just this egg-shell tone she wanted. They'd pound at it and bring the plaster down. It would lie in heaps on the floor. They'd walk on it and kick it about. In so many

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other rooms she had wanted this room. To lie in this bed and look through the elm tree—that was part of her life. "It's *me* you're tearing down," she thought.

And just when it seemed she couldn't bear it strength came through hardness, for she remembered her father had broken up her room, piled the things in the attic and given her room to a hired man who turned out so despicable he killed him. It bore out what he said in the letter—he couldn't bear the thought of her, wanted no reminder. He wasn't going to have it *her* room. He'd let it be anyone else's to keep it from being hers.

Things that happened here long ago brought this house down now. It seemed wasteful, for that was a long time back, and now good life could be lived here. Only—it couldn't.

Looking up at the cemetery she thought: "You win." Let it become graves.

But it was raining up there where the dead were and so she ran down to the door and called: "Hurry in out of the rain!"

Diego was already stabling Pancho. Hans came running with Koula, who had her own dress wrapped around the doll Jenifer, who wore her red satin coat.

"When it rains we make fudge!" Koula cried.

So they made fudge. She beat it and Diego beat and Koula. Koula licked from her finger and said, "It's

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good." "Only one piece before supper," Lydia said. "And more after supper!" they cried.

She poached eggs and made toast. As often, they ate their supper in the kitchen. It was a large and cheery room. "The most convenient kitchen I ever cooked in," Addie would say. Father built it so Mother could have the last sun of day. How he had loved Mother. And how little he loved anyone else. It wasn't the way to love.

No last sun came in tonight. The rain had become a downpour. Yes, she heard it on the roof now—though she didn't want to think about it. "Somebody is forgetting to drink her milk," she said. "No milk, no fudge."

Just like other nights. They didn't know yet. Did God feel about us as we feel about children, and keep hard things from us as long as He could, and was that why we were sometimes so slow in knowing them?

It was harder getting them to bed, very hard not to keep thinking, You won't sleep in these good little beds again. They had an upstairs romp before turning in. They'd remember these romps in their night suits. It was a good place for romping—through the rooms and up the attic stairs.

She tucked Koula in. The night was cool for early September. This wasn't the warm rain of summer. "Goodnight, darling," she said, and Koula put up her arms for the hug.

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"Pancho can't get wet," Diego meditated. "His place doesn't leak." "Mercy, no," she said. "We wouldn't let Pancho get wet."

This had always been a satisfying moment—when she went downstairs after seeing the children to bed. She would live for a little with funny last things they had said—amused or touched. They had had their good day, and now were safe up there going to sleep. She would turn to other things—reading or writing a letter or mending, feeling so at peace because all was well with them.

Well, she had things to turn to tonight. She hadn't gone through her desk.

She tried to be business-like about it. She mustn't *think*. She looked through bills, wrote some checks. Here were the receipts for work done on the house this summer. She had spent a lot of money. "I'm sorry you've been put to the expense," her father had said—the one thing about which he expressed any regret!

She worked swiftly, and then, in the last drawer she opened, way at the back she came upon a thin packet of letters tied with narrow blue ribbon.

She sat holding them. What would she do with them?

Untie them, tear them to pieces and throw them in the waste-basket with other discarded things? *These* letters—torn to bits?

Ought she send them to her father? He would be

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angry she had found them while "prowling around" where she had no business to be.

Could she take them with her? They were the best she had found of the past. They made her so proud and free the day she found them.

But she had no right to them. From her mother's heart they were, and the woman who had once been the girl Hertha shut the girl Lydia from her heart.

She felt helpless. She couldn't understand. It seemed the things she had been told couldn't be true. They couldn't be true because it wasn't in her to believe them. If they were true, then she knew nothing about the human heart. To her it couldn't be true you had it in you to love as the girl who wrote these letters had and then leave your own child unloved because someone told you to.

Hard to believe her father had never loved her, never wanted her there, for she had *seen* love in his eyes and heard it in his voice. "Don't we know it when we see it?" she thought. "Are we *fooled*? Do we just make it up?"

It seemed that could not be. "Surely there are tricks not played on us," she thought. "What we *feel* is true, isn't there, underneath everything else, truth in that?" Her father wrote her, I never loved you. But what of remembered moments when she had felt love warm between them?

She took her lamp and went all through the rooms. In

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the morning she would just hurry away. This was good-by. She thought of the long past this house had known. Some of it must have been good. Those kind people—Grandfather and Grandmother Chippman, who took in the lost girl and said, “As much as John is our boy you are our girl.” They are my grandparents, she thought; and then remembered—No, they aren’t.

Who *were* her grandparents? There was one called Papa who sang “Now Hoist Her High—Up to the Sky.” She would have liked him, she was sure; and Mama, who never wanted her children to be afraid. She didn’t even know their name. And her own father—she didn’t know his name or what manner of man he was. She didn’t know where he came from, where he went, whether he now walked the earth or was in his grave.

She had come into the kitchen, put the lamp down and sat at the table. She had seemed to have more feeling about the past than any of them. It had always seemed beautiful to her that today opened from a past that had made us, and whenever she came to know little things about those who were gone, those who had been before her, she was pleased and they seemed close to her. She would think, I am because they have been.

She sat on there, hearing the rain, wondering if it would stop before tomorrow, thinking how it was falling also up there on the hill, beating upon graves of people who had once lived in this house.

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Perhaps it didn't matter much who she was. Finally we all become as one. Only, it was a little lonely, not knowing who was your father. She had always felt something comforting in just the idea of a father caring for his child. "As a father comforteth his child—" Those had been beautiful words to her.

She rose and put her hand on the lamp. "Our Father who art in heaven," she thought, tremulously smiling a little, "will you be my Father?"

Suddenly her hand clenched on the lamp and she put both hands on it to make sure she wouldn't tip it. Thus bending over the table she stood staring straight ahead.

Someone was looking in the window.

She could not distinguish the face, but a man stood there peering in at her.

She was frightened, for who would stand there in the rain looking in the window? Henry Kircher would come to the door, or Addie's husband—Warren, or anybody she knew would come to the door.

This figure withdrew from the window and she heard him moving toward the door.

There was a knock. "Who is it?" she called.

"It's me, Lydia. Let me in."

She supported herself by the table. "Let me in," a voice she remembered said again.

She got to the door and opened it. A drenched figure stood there. It was her father.

Chapter XXIV

SHE couldn't move. She was too astounded even to be afraid.

Then she realized she was blocking the door, keeping him out in the rain. She stood aside and said, "Come in."

He stepped inside and closed the door. The water from his clothes was already making puddles on the floor. He took off his hat, gave it a shake and it sprayed her with water. He pushed his hand back over his hair and leaned against the door, too exhausted to move another step.

"Why—why, Father," she gasped. "You're soaking wet!"

He nodded. "Yes, I've been—out in it."

"Here—sit down. You must have dry clothes. There are some of your things here. Just a minute—I'll get them."

"Never mind," he said. "I won't have long to stay." He was so worn out it came breathlessly.

"But you can't sit in those clothes. You'd get your death!"

"I came—I have something to tell you. I want to tell you—"

"Just a minute. I have some brandy." She ran to get

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it. "Here, drink this while I get dry—" She was racing up the stairs.

Here in this trunk she had put them—clothes he had left. She had aired them one sunny day and put them away. She didn't know why.

She insisted on helping him. He was so exhausted he didn't object. "Now—rub with this towel. And I'll have a fire—there's one laid in the dining-room."

She pulled up his own old chair and soon had him before the fireplace. He coughed and he was chattering. She wrapped a blanket round him, pulled up a footstool so he could put his feet to the blaze. "Now. You'll be all right in a minute." She poured more brandy in the glass. "Take this."

"Why, Lydia"—he looked up at her with a faint smile—"you want to get me drunk?"

Why that was Father! A little joke between them. It made her know he was home, and she began to wonder how that could be.

"But how did you get here, Father?"

"I walked from town." Again the suggestion of a smile. "I didn't care to have folks in town see me. Thought they might be surprised."

"But how could you—get away?"

"I just—left. Oh, I got away," he said. "I got the evening train."

"But won't they—be looking for you?"

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He nodded. "I'll have to go right back."

But he *couldn't*. He was hoarse, and still shaking. Exhausted. How thin he was!

"Now I'll get you some hot tea."

"No. Just sit still. I want to tell you—before they come for me!"

He clenched his hands and was looking at her sternly. "I've *got* to tell you."

And as he sat there so tense, his clenched hands shaking, looking at her in this fixed stern way she wondered why she hadn't been afraid of him at first. But he had been so beaten by the storm—weak, helpless. What had he come for? To turn them out? He had run away to get here—plodded through pouring rain in the dark. This was no easy friendly visit. His eyes were burning as he looked at her now. He hadn't even looked around. He didn't know the house was different. One thing he had come for, and he knew nothing else. Had he come to do them harm? She thought of the children asleep upstairs.

"We are leaving in the morning," she said.

He paid no heed. Spots of bright red had come in his cheeks.

"Soon I'll be up there"—he jerked a hand toward the graveyard on the hill. "I have to leave one person on earth who understands. I've *got* to!" he cried.

"And you're the one," he said more quietly.

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He was shivering and she pulled the blanket more closely around him. Very quietly she sat down again—a low chair beside him.

"The reason it's so hard," he said, "is that I spent my whole life guarding it. I thought I would take it to my grave."

She couldn't speak and he did not. There was only the steady sound of the rain and the old clock ticking on the mantel.

"It's about your mother. Your mother and me."

She nodded, but he didn't see her. He was looking at something else, a steady burning look.

"I found her up there on the hill. She was lost. It was raining then too. She was crying. She was—just a little girl then. I took her down here to the house, and after that she lived with us.

"She had come from— But I haven't time to tell you all that. They'll come for me, or my strength will go. Haven't time—"

"Yes," she assured him. "Just tell me what you think you should."

"We lived here in this house—" He did look around then. "It's different now."

"A little. But it's still the same house."

He nodded—frowned then, impatient with this diversion. He went on: "We lived here in this house like

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brother and sister. She had lost her own brother. His name was Joe."

"Yes," said Lydia, but he did not seem to consider how she could know.

"She grieved for him." (Pauses between each terse thing he said—as if going by much he hadn't time and strength to say.) "I told her I'd be her brother. And after a time—she came to think of me as her brother.

"That was the trouble," he whispered, as if again seeing it for himself, as well as telling Lydia. "She did just that—came to think of me as her brother.

"And me—at first it was that way with me too. Until she grew up. Then I didn't *want* her to think of me as her brother!"

He paused and turned to Lydia. "Do you remember how she looked?"

"Oh, yes!" she said. "I never saw anyone as beautiful."

"And no one else ever did. She was like—I can't say it. How can you? Anything I said—wouldn't be fair to her." He sat there dwelling with it, his face a little relaxed.

"I remember the first day I knew I didn't want to be her brother. The apple trees were in bloom and she was out among them." Sharply he drew in his breath as he saw it again. "The blossoms—" he whispered. "She was like the blossoms."

This moment—Lydia—did not live for him then; only

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the beauty and fragrance of that moment long ago lived for him now.

"Then I knew; as she drew down a bough and smelled it, held it against her face, then—then I wasn't as I was before. Why it came all at *once*," he said wonderingly.

"There wasn't anything else then. It filled the world—it *was* the world. I loved her and that was my life and my life wasn't anything else.

"When you love—like that, when it *takes* you—and nothing else—" He was trembling and couldn't go on.

This gaunt silent man, things held within him all his life—so hard for him to talk of love. Timidly she put out a hand to touch him—but didn't, not quite.

"And after that I didn't know what to do." It came from so deep and was said so simply.

"I think I can understand, Father."

He shook his head. "No. No, you can't. She had been so frightened. Things had happened to her too awful to tell. She wasn't herself with other people. She—she held back. It was just with us—here at home. She did come to feel at home here. Safe here. Safe from the world. She wanted it to be—just the way it was. And I was her brother.

"Then Mother and Father both died, in the same week. It was more shock to her than to me. It was like things going to pieces again, the way they had before. Her own mother and father—they died together; they were

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drowned, and she was separated from her brother, and everything that had been—wasn't any more. Now that all came back. Now that would happen again, she thought. I had to comfort her." He moaned. "Oh, it was hard—comfort her like a brother when I—when I loved her—the way I loved her.

"What could I *do*?" he cried—and the torment of those days tortured this moment. "She said, 'I have you, John. You are all I have.' She meant—as a brother.

"It seemed she couldn't have stood any more changes then, couldn't have stood knowing my feeling wasn't like—like I had led her to believe. So we just stayed on here together for a while—her and me—alone in this house, her depending on me as a brother and me—" He twisted his hands together. "I didn't know how to stand it! I didn't know what to do! She'd *touch* me and—

"Well, it was hard," he said more calmly. "She was more beautiful all the time. I used to say goodnight to her and—Yes; it was hard.

"Then some busybody woman came. Seems they were talking, about our not being brother and sister, and staying on here together—alone in the house. You see Hertha was so beautiful—everyone talked about that. And maybe they suspected about me—how I felt—what I wanted. You can't always help how you look at the one you love, or how your voice sounds.

"Anyway they were making it their business. I was

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working over in the field that day and this woman talked to Hertha.

"When I came in she threw her arms around me and cried: 'Don't let them take me away! You won't, John, will you? Don't let them separate us! We'll stay here together in this house! Tell me! Tell me yes. I'm so afraid!'

"She had her arms around me, and then—me too, holding her to me, telling her we would never be apart.

"After that—I had to. I had felt her close to me then, I—" He said in the simple way we state what we have found to be true: "There are things you can't help.

"So I told her there was one way. We could get married, I said.

"At first she couldn't understand I meant that. But we couldn't, she said. We were brother and sister—just like brother and sister, she said.

"But we weren't really, I would tell her. And then, the best I could, I told her I didn't feel like her brother now. It was her husband I wanted to be.

"This—it shocked her, more than I knew then, I guess. She went around so quiet. I didn't try to touch her again. And after a day or two she asked, was it the only way we could go on living together in this house. And I—God forgive me—I told her yes."

He sank back, so spent Lydia was afraid. But what

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could she do? She knew there would be no rest for him until he finished what he had come to say.

"Maybe God has forgiven me," he said when he could go on. "He punished me enough—so maybe—

"She never felt any different," he said slowly. "She always thought of me as her brother. She thought to be married to me was wrong."

"*Father*—" Lydia breathed in swift deep feeling.

"I tried to make it different. By talking to her—being gentle. But—" his face flushed with the words—"a man loves as man was meant to love. She—she tried to be good, as she put it. She said she would do anything for me. But her—I don't think it ever did anything but horrify her."

Lydia turned her face away, then covered it, as if the working of her face should not be exposed, even with no one to see.

"So after a while, soon after Warren was born, I tried not to torture her. Or not much. Not often. Only when—"

He had been too reticent all his life to be able to say things like this.

"Yes," said Lydia. "Yes, I understand."

But do I? she thought. Do I understand love like this—that of love denied can make a lifetime of devotion. It was almost as if she should not look upon love like this—like looking upon the face of God.

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"When I wrote you"—he took it up in a labored way, so near exhaustion—"well, I guess I did it all wrong. I thought you were living here in this house blaming your mother, and I couldn't let—" He asked anxiously: "You did know I wasn't your father, didn't you?"

She shook her head.

"Why—*Lydia*,"—and for the first time he was really thinking of *her*. "Oh—what have I done?" he whispered in such horror that she had to say hastily: "It's all right now, Father."

He shook his head. "It must have—hurt you so."

"Yes," she had to admit.

"I'm afraid I wasn't thinking of you," he said sadly. "How it would be for you. I was thinking of Hertha. I—I'd gotten so used to that."

"I know," she said tenderly.

There were tears on the face that was almost as gray as death; it was such a trembling hand he held out to her. "You were always a good girl. I always loved you. You knew that," he asked appealingly, "didn't you?"

"It was hard to know it from your letter, Father. But there were other things. Things I remembered."

"Oh I hope so," he whispered. "You see," he went on, saying each word slowly, "I thought I couldn't show I loved you. Hertha couldn't show it, because she thought she had wronged me—having you. She couldn't show it,

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so then how could I? It would be like me taking what she couldn't have."

And that you couldn't do, thought Lydia; no matter what it might do to another—even to a child in your house.

"I thought from your letter, now you were back here thinking of *me*—shutting her out, because she had shut you out."

"No; I wasn't shutting her out," said Lydia.

"So I told you it was *my* doings. I didn't want you to put it on her. She'd had enough."

As if you hadn't—had enough, thought Lydia.

"Oh I don't know *what* I thought when I wrote that letter," he cried desperately. "Such a beautiful letter you wrote me—loving. And I had to drive you away from me—because—"

"I think I understand, Father."

"Because I wanted you—your love, and how could I let it be you and me—when it hadn't been you and Hertha. After she was gone me taking what she couldn't have! But I must have *known* it was wrong—the letter. I never even read it over—afraid I wouldn't send it. And then afterwards—I couldn't rest. For what had I done, I thought. Maybe you *hadn't* known, and now I'd told you a little—not enough. And you'd *blame* your mother—because you wouldn't understand. And she's in her grave—never one word can she say for herself—never again."

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So I had to come right away, for how do I know how long I'll live?" he asked excitedly.

Not long, I fear, thought Lydia, for it was as if he hadn't strength for the feeling that possessed him, now all fresh in him once more.

"And then I thought about you. That you were *good*. Yes, you are, I know that. You are hurt and don't strike back, and that is good, though maybe it makes it hard for you. You weren't shown love and yet you loved. You were sent away from home and— There must have been a lot you didn't understand."

"Yes," said Lydia.

"And so I thought—knowing I'd soon be up there with Hertha—I want to leave on earth one person who understands. Then she'll still live."

As you've kept her living, thought Lydia.

"But I haven't *told* you," he cried helplessly. "How it could be. Things that would seem wrong—not wrong the way you'd think. I haven't explained—why she couldn't help it. They may be coming for me now!" He looked to the window. "Any time now and I haven't—"

She put her hand on his. "Father," she said, "you've told me enough. From this I can understand all the rest. Now you can just leave it to me to understand."

He looked at her to see if he could leave it here. He shook his head. "No," he said. "No, you couldn't. Not yet. Not until—"

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He paused before it, seeking the way to make it plain to her, and gathering up his strength. "With me—love with me—that was wrong. It was against nature and a sin. Love outside—that was natural. That was right."

Lydia thought of the beautiful Hertha. Of how she must have been desired and of her own need for love, of how she grew for love as the plants for the flowers—the horror of this love with her "brother," and the release, feeling of being right with life, in love her flesh told her was as it should be. Love sang in her and told her it was good. Her body said yes and she was as if cleansed of what had been wrong and was one with life. Oh, yes, what it did for Hertha—that she could understand.

And what it inflicted upon *him*—?

It was as if he followed her thought. Pain was all through him. "I thought I couldn't. *Couldn't*. But it gave her—what I couldn't give her. I couldn't keep anything from her. And I had done her a great wrong. I would make it right for her—any way I could."

His face twisted with the old anguish he said slowly: "And so she blossomed and grew more lovely—with others."

What horror in this house, thought Lydia; and when unable to bear it thought, What love.

"Men—why, they would have given their very lives for her. Because—because there had never been such beauty

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in the world. A man named Blake. Long ago. Someone you don't know. And here a man—well, you do know him, not right to speak names you know. I guess they couldn't help it either. Can you help living? Can you help the way you are? When you see—what you hadn't dreamed could be on this earth—well, do you walk away from glory? They would have given up anything in the world for her. But her—yes, she turned to their love—to the sun. She couldn't *help* it," he said desperately. "But she was always faithful and loyal to me." He turned and gave Lydia a keen look. "Now maybe you don't believe that."

It's asking a good deal—to believe that, thought Lydia. "I knew about it. I would have given her anything on this earth I could."

But now an old battle was there to fight again and something flamed that had to be defended. "Oh, I know what a man would think! Think I *wasn't* a man. No manhood—they'd say, no pride. Well, I gave *that*. It was *there*—they needn't think it *wasn't there*—and they can be damned with what they think! I knew what I was doing," he said. "I ought to. I know what it took."

Greater gift a man could not give, she thought. Last gift. Self. Self and the pride of self.

"And you didn't—blame her?" asked Lydia, moved as never in her life yet finding it hard to believe such love could be.

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He sat thinking how to answer. Quietly he said: "Do you blame an apple tree for blooming?"

Lydia was silenced.

Yet not entirely, for she was thinking of *him*—now this old man, broken now, almost spent, who gave his last strength breaking the silence of a lifetime in a last loyalty to the woman he loved. She couldn't bear it, couldn't accept his Hertha, if she didn't know Hertha had some idea what she took from him.

"Did she know—how hard it was for you?" she asked.

"Oh, nobody could know that," he said simply. "And of course I didn't want her to. She knew—in a way. But I think she thought she had more to give me. She was alive now, she thought. This was nature, she thought. Seemed as if it took her into life—away from the wrong—the sin—sin of having lived with me—her brother. I guess it had to be," was all he could say of that.

"She'd never have left me. In a way, she loved me more than them. She had need of them—to bloom. But her need of me—" His whole face was drawn like his knitted brows, trying so hard to see—say it. "I had to *be* here—so's she could go to them and find—what 'twas meant she have. Without me here—she'd have been afraid. Too much had happened to her—long time before—that's why she was afraid. So I had to *be* here, or she'd have been—lost again. I was mainstay of her life. 'Twas me made her safe—in anything she did."

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"Oh I can't *say* it!" he cried out. "I want to tell you. *Got* to tell you—so's I can rest beside her and know someone is left on earth who understands. *Someone*—you—know she wasn't wrong. But I never talked much. I don't know how to say things."

"You say it," she told him.

He didn't seem to hear her and sat a long time without speaking before he said: "It was only about your father—"

"Yes?" said Lydia, faintly.

"I didn't want her—with him. I asked her not to. I didn't know about it. That's why she thought it was wrong—about him. Thought she had done wrong to me—about him."

"You didn't—like him?" It was all she could do to speak the words.

"I didn't understand him. He was different. He seemed so—light-hearted."

Light-hearted. "But that isn't—so bad." She laughed a little.

"He was a French Canadian. He was dark—like you. You look like him. That's why Hertha—you see every time she looked at you—"

"I see," said Lydia. "And you too—every time you looked at me—"

He shook his head. "No, not me. You were Hertha's baby, and while you were still a baby I began to love you for yourself. I always loved you, Lydia."

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Her elbows were on her knees and her hands covered her face. "Thank you, Father," she said in muffled voice.

"But Hertha couldn't believe it wasn't too hard for me. She thought you always made me think of how she'd deceived me—that once. And you made *her* think of it—till seemed she couldn't stand it. She brooded on it and I got afraid for her.

"She thought she couldn't show she loved you—though she *did*—she did, Lydia; and I couldn't show it, because—well, I've told you, tried to tell you. And so you were sent away."

"I seem to have made a great deal of trouble," said Lydia.

"It wasn't your fault."

"I don't see how I could have helped it." She tried to laugh.

He was considering something else. "I guess I was mistaken—about him. I wasn't used to anyone who was gay like that. But I guess he was all right, because—well, he's your father, and look at you."

Lydia asked: "Where is he now?"

"We never heard from him again. He just came here. Then he went away. He was sort of a wanderer."

"He didn't know—about me?"

"Oh, no. No, of course not."

He was light-hearted. He was a wanderer, Her father. She looked like him. That was all she knew.

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Timidly she said: "I wish you could tell me a little about him. I'd like to know—"

"Father!" she cried sharply, for she had looked up at him and saw how he had fallen back in his chair. She was frightened. He looked scarcely alive. "Father! Speak to me!"

He opened his eyes; the lids fluttered a moment, then closed. "You understand it now?" he asked wearily.

"Yes," she said. "You'll have to get to bed now."

He tried to rise. "I'll have to go."

"You can't go, Father. Not tonight. You'll have to stay here tonight."

"All right," he said, too weak to protest.

She got him to bed in the downstairs bedroom. He couldn't have gone upstairs. It was all she could do to get him here. She sat by him, for he frightened her; not only was he so weak but his breathing wasn't right, that rasping sound, and there was pain for he would wince and cry out. He should have a doctor, she thought; what will I do? It was three o'clock. It was still raining. I was leaving in the morning, she thought. As soon as it was light she would send Diego to Henry Kircher's, ask him to telephone Warren and bring a doctor. She stayed there with him, doing what she could think of to do. And just before daybreak she heard a car drive in.

It was Warren and a strange man with him. "Is Father here?" he demanded.

Chapter XXV

THE rain had beaten down the marigolds and asters in her garden. Branches were down from the trees—Diego was gathering them into a pile. Hans would snatch boughs and prance with them.

She had stepped out for a moment. The air after a storm is purified and vigorous. The night had done damage, but the morning was clean and fresh. . . .

Warren came out from the house. “But *why* did he come, Lydia?” he asked, as he had been asking through the hours since he arrived with the officer.

“He wanted to see me.”

“He didn’t have to do it *this* way.”

“Yes, he had to.”

“*Why* did he have to see you?”

“He had to.”

“He had no right to leave there!”

“Oh—Warren, that’s so—unimportant.”

“You think so!” he said bitterly.

“I mean, it’s so much more than—a right to leave there.”

“You’re not being very helpful—I must say. Have you any idea of the trouble it’s making?”

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"What trouble can it make?"

"Use your *mind*, Lydia. They'll put him back where he was at first."

"It wouldn't matter to him," she said. "Everything is all right with him now. They can't do anything to him."

Nothing her brother said could disturb the feeling everything was all right with her father now, though she knew he was very sick. Even that was all right for him now. He had come to the end of what he had to do. He had traveled his long hard road. He had given Hertha his last gift.

Two other men came and said they would have to take him back. "Not until the doctor sees him," she said. They looked at him and agreed they must wait for the doctor.

The doctor settled it. "It would be murder to move him," he said. "He has pneumonia."

One man was left there—to guard, she supposed. It didn't matter, though it seemed rather silly. What harm could Father do anyone now?

A nurse arrived. In the afternoon Ivy came out. Lydia was in the kitchen, getting something for the nurse, and Ivy found her there. She came up to her swiftly, said breathlessly: "*Lydia*. Isn't this *terrible!*!"

"Why, I don't think so," said Lydia.

"How can you *say* that? It's just stubborn of you! Of course," she excused, "I know you must be overwrought. Why I don't suppose you've had any sleep! But it *is*

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terrible, and we might as well face the facts. It's all—back. Everyone's talking again!"

She put her arm round Ivy's shoulder. "Oh, Ivy, what do you care? Let them talk—for a little while. There's certainly nothing *bad* they can say about Father."

Ivy stared at her. Then: "I know you must be very tired," she said; "I didn't come to argue. Heaven knows it's hard enough on *you*. It was inconsiderate of your father!"

Lydia laughed. "Inconsiderate? That doesn't seem the word."

"I don't think the doctor expects him to get well."

"I don't suppose he does."

"Well you're very calm about it!"

"Yes," she said. "Yes, I am."

"So I thought I'd better take the children in to our house."

Lydia considered it. "Perhaps you had. It's mighty good of you."

"It would be hard to keep them quiet here—and you have enough on your hands—goodness knows you have. School starts Tuesday. If—if they can't be back here by then, I'll start them in school."

She was thinking, But they weren't to go to school. Well, now it seemed they were. Everything was different now.

The children were pleased with the idea of a visit at

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their Aunt Ivy's. Lydia had told them her father had come home, and that he was very sick. "But we didn't know you had a father!" they cried, very excited about this. She'd tell them all about it some other time, she said—and would they be just as quiet as they could.

Their things are all packed, she thought now.

Ivy kissed her good-by. "Do try and get some sleep. We'll be here before time for Addie to leave."

Addie was going about in an awed frightened manner. Lydia assured her: "It's all right. My father just wanted to come home."

During the few days that followed she would sit with her father, relieving the nurse. She had no idea he was going to get well and knew he didn't think so, and didn't want to. He had finished what he had to do.

At times when he was conscious he would smile at her. But he seldom spoke, and never of the things he had told her. He didn't have to speak about it any more. He knew Lydia understood, and in that he rested. When their eyes met he told her he could leave in peace now. Peace. He had never had that.

You are having the one day more you wanted in this house, she would think. She didn't know why he had wanted that day. So much she did not know, and she could smile a little at herself—she who had had this great need to know what was back of her, and so meager were the facts she had learned. She didn't know where Mama

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and Papa came from. They lived on a boat. The Erie Canal? Might be. Their nationality? Scandinavian, perhaps. Hertha said she looked like Mama. But she knew "Now Hoist Her High—Up to the Sky"—and Mama didn't want her children to be afraid. About her own father she knew almost nothing. She didn't even know his name—or know her mother's name. Had he come from the great north woods—smell of the pine and the spruce? He came here and then went away. They loved for their moment, and then—someone called Lydia Chippman. Strange way to be begotten, she thought—strange it was thus *she* came to be, this Lydia person who had needed roots in a life she knew. Something of a joke on her, perhaps—and she wondered why the joke didn't dismay her. Life is not of our ordering, she thought, but chaotic—unpredictable. What we seek we do not find—that would be too trim and tidy for so reckless and opulent a thing as life. It is something else we find.

A wanderer. He was a wanderer—her father. Then he could be from all of life. He was light-hearted.

All that remained to be known was locked away now, and for good. Facts not yet told would go with this other father to the grave. But it wasn't facts brought the light. It was those deep stirrings of the human heart. Sitting beside the man whose days were coming to an end she thought of the long story of this house and as she con-

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sidered his unfailing love she felt so very close to life. She was *proud* of life. She would never be lost again.

Her hand was on his as he left the life of his ordeal and his love. It was her hand he felt but not her name he spoke before his lips were sealed. Hertha was the name to which he gave his last breath. She was glad of that.

THE END

